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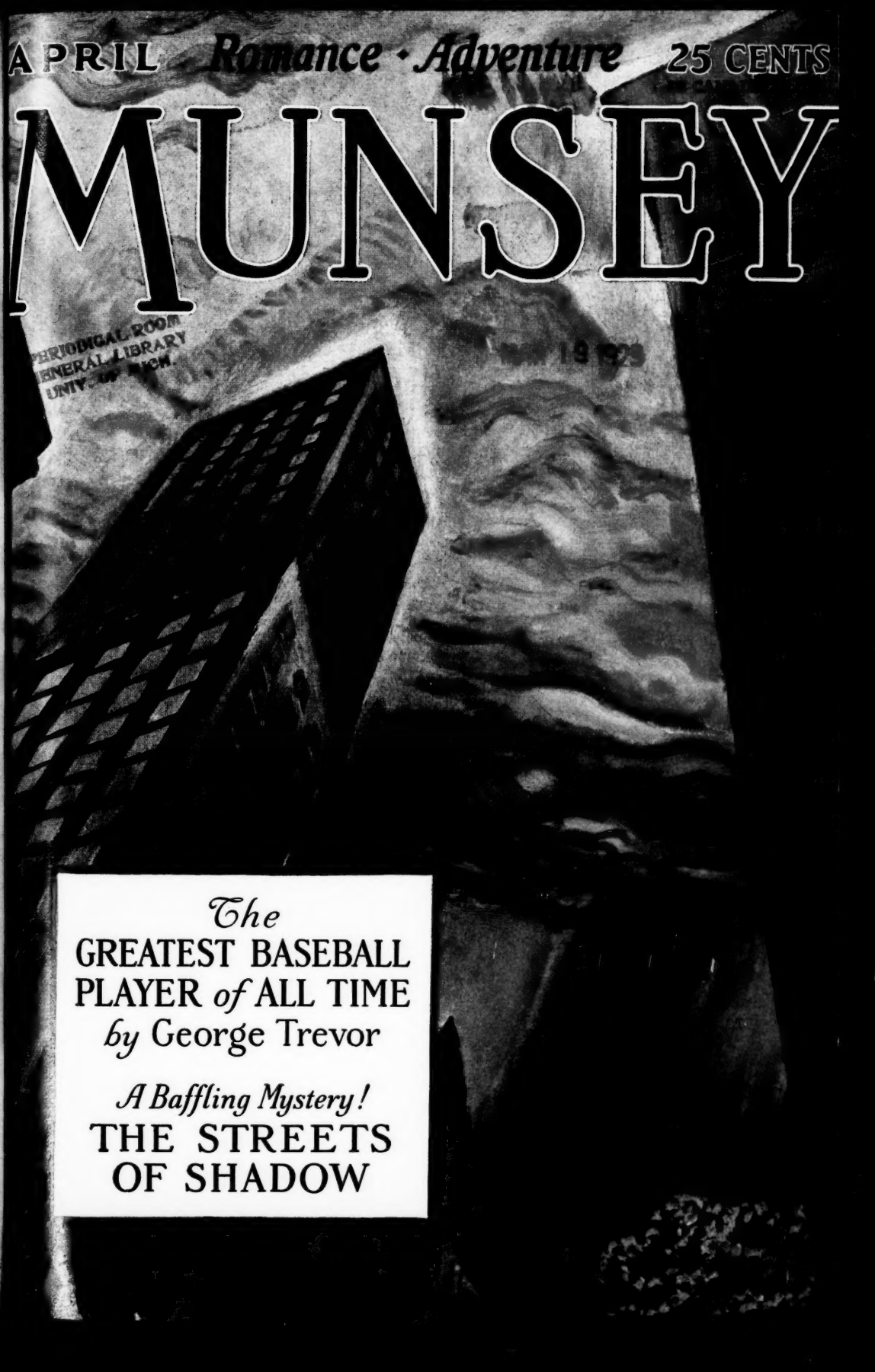

The
GREATEST BASEBALL PLAYER *of* ALL TIME
by George Trevor

A Baffling Mystery!
THE STREETS OF SHADOW

MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

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APRIL 1929

Munsey's Magazine

Vol. XCVI Number 3

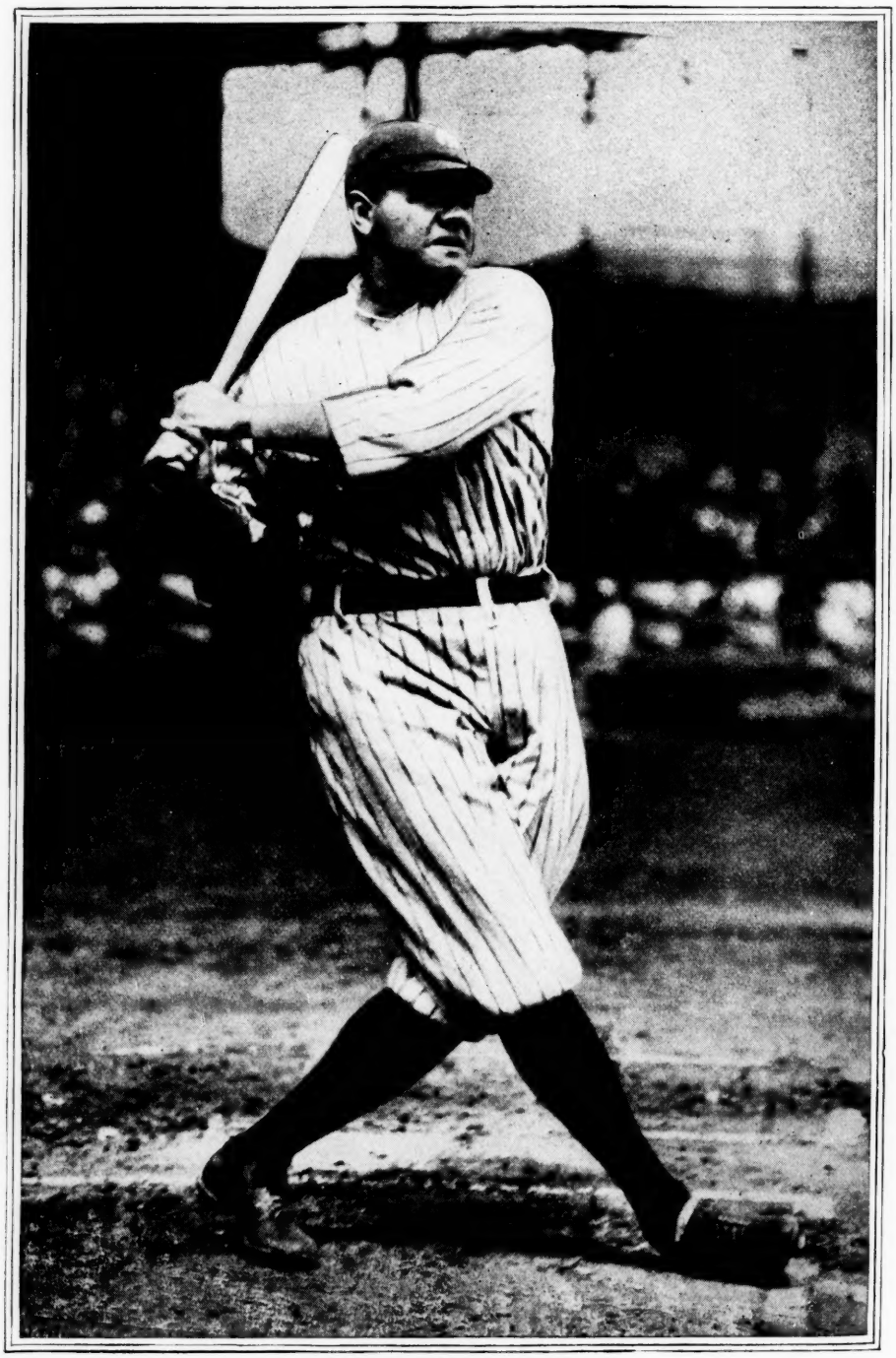
The Greatest Baseball Player of All Time

By George Trevor

BROTHER GILBERT shoved back his chair in the administration office of St. Mary's Catholic School at Baltimore and hammered the top of his desk with a sturdy fist as if to emphasize the point he was driving home to his visitor. His words carried conviction.

"Jack, I've a hunch this kid can play ball. I've tried him at bookkeeping, carpentry, mechanics, bricklaying, plastering, gardening, and everything else in the curriculum, without success. He

JOHN HENRY WAGNER
At shortstop his massive hands smothered the helpless ball



GEORGE HERMAN RUTH
He put the home run industry on a mass production basis

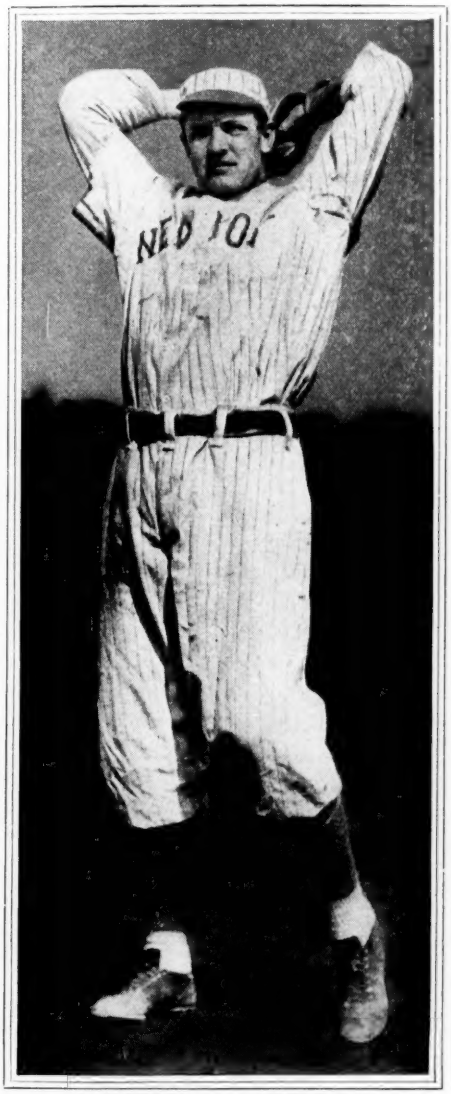
muffed 'em all. They say every boy can do some one thing well. By the process of elimination this youngster must be a ball player."

Brother Gilbert guessed right that time. The boy was George Herman Ruth, better known as "Babe." You may have seen his name in the papers. The visitor was Jack Dunn, manager of the Baltimore Orioles.

Dunn lived across the road from St. Mary's School. Incidentally it isn't an orphanage, and Babe Ruth wasn't an orphan boy, although the sob sisters tried to make him one. Babe's parents, pinched by poverty, committed him to St. Mary's to keep him out of mischief along Baltimore's squalid water front.

Dunn used to drop in daily during the winter for a chat with Brother Gilbert, an ardent ball fan. During the

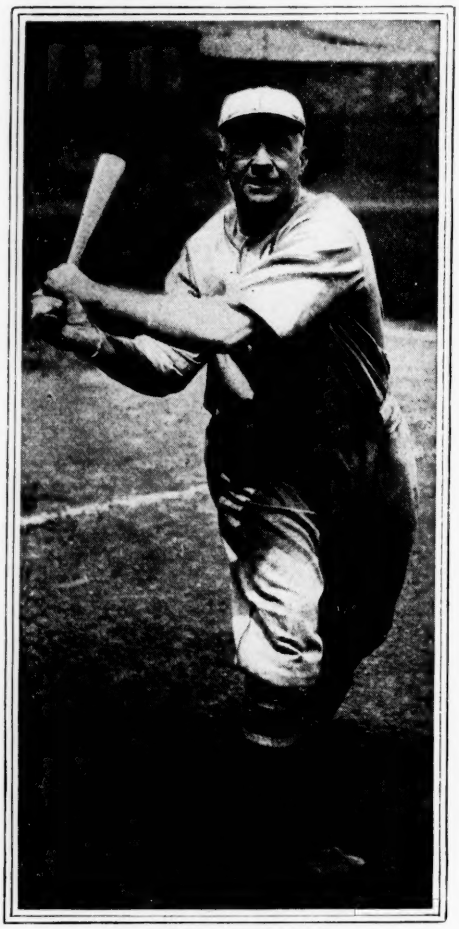
DENTON T. YOUNG
Old "Cy" was the nearest approach to perpetual motion on the pitcher's mound



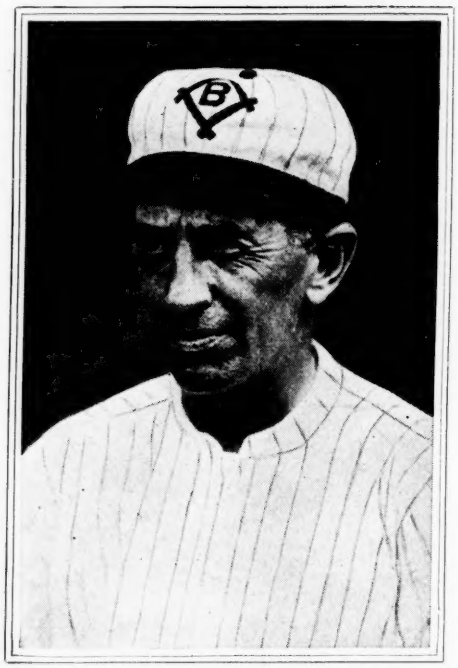
CHRISTOPHER MATHEWSON
Beloved "Big Six." He pitched with his brain as well as his good right arm

noon recess, the Baltimore manager, a Nestor of the diamond who developed more major league headliners than any other baseball coach, stood behind the bat on the St. Mary's sand lot and watched the rawboned, gangling Babe bend his left-handed pitches across the plate.

Ruth was then a stringy, scrawny kid, a living counterpart of Booth Tarkington's "Seventeen." His motion was awkward; his curve was dinky, but the kid had smoke—a "hard one" that plunked lustily in the catcher's mitt. There was an earnestness about



TRISTRAM SPEAKER
The "Gray Eagle," who preyed upon far-flung drives



WILLIE KEELER
Right fielder, who placed his hits where the fielders were not!

him, or rather an exuberance that caught Dunn's fancy. He, too, played a hunch.

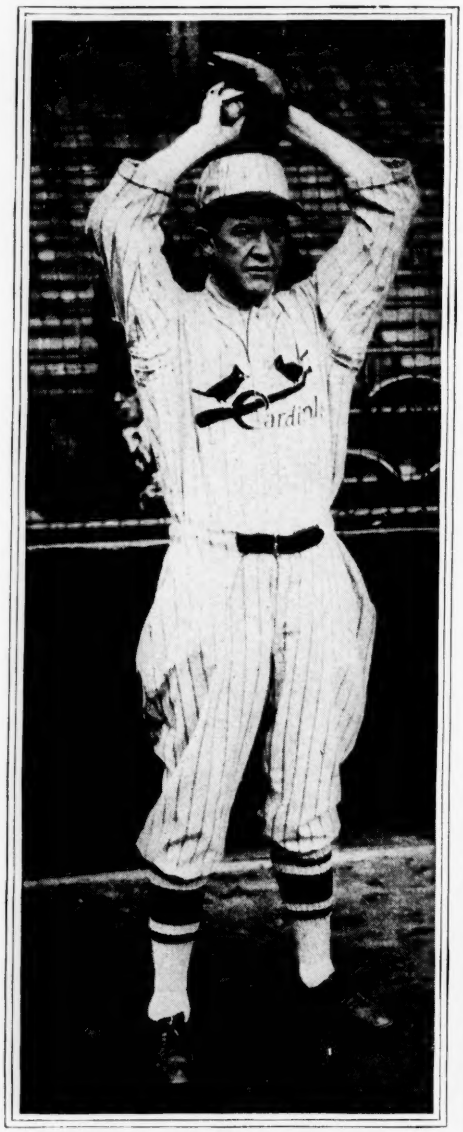
"Mr. Dunn has agreed to pay you six hundred dollars a year if you sign a Baltimore contract," explained Brother Gilbert later. "Will you be satisfied with that?"

"Sure," said Babe, never given to heroics. And that was that.

Thirteen years drift by. Iris in on Babe Ruth sitting at Colonel Ruppert's mahogany desk in the latter's sumptuous office in the Yankee Stadium. Massed photographers level a battery of lenses upon the Babe's Hogarthian face. Reporters crowd about his Falstaffian figure, pencils poised as they rack their brains for "leads" worthy of so momentous an occasion.

Ruth wrinkles his brow, takes the gold pen tendered him so solicitously by President Ruppert, and, as the American nation holds its breath, scrawls his incongruously gentle name

WALTER JOHNSON
The "Big Train," a pitcher with rifle speed and hair-trigger control



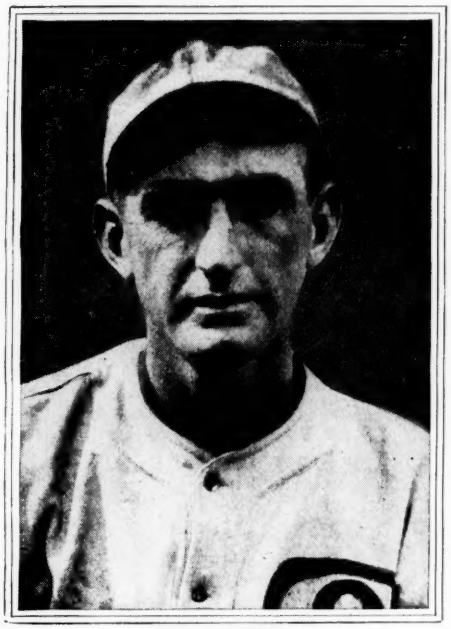
GROVER CLEVELAND ALEXANDER
His masterly cross-fire held batters at bay

to a three-year contract calling for seventy thousand dollars a year—the biggest sum of money ever paid to a baseball player.

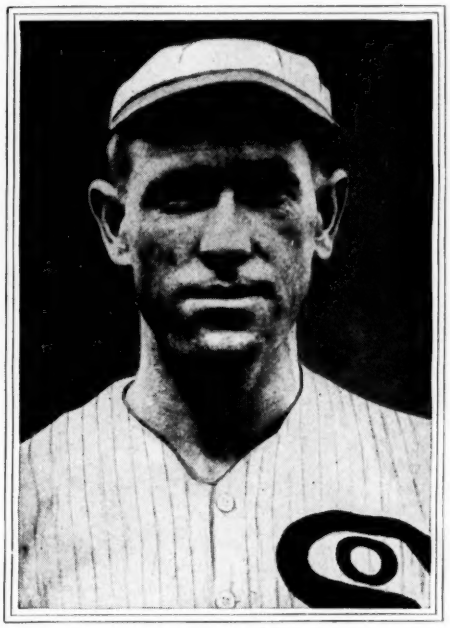
Nobody repeats Brother Gilbert's question: "Will you be satisfied with that?" They know that the great man is not satisfied. He wanted one hundred thousand dollars—was offered fifty thousand dollars, and compromised on what Broadway calls "seventy grand." That is five thousand less than the President of the United States receives, but Babe has yet to make his final gesture.

What price that this fantastic figure doesn't force Ruppert to raise the ante in 1930? The colossus whose prowess with the bat built the Yankee Stadium is worthy of his hire. Somewhere in these United States there may be those who have never heard of Calvin Coolidge, but try to find the man who

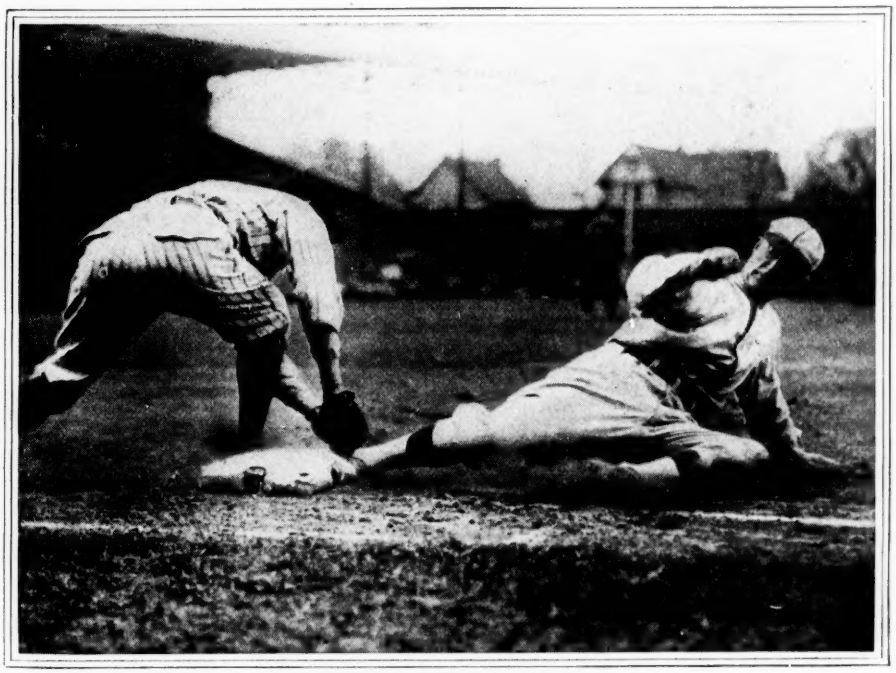
EDDIE COLLINS
Dynamic second baseman, who always delivered in a pinch at bat or in the field



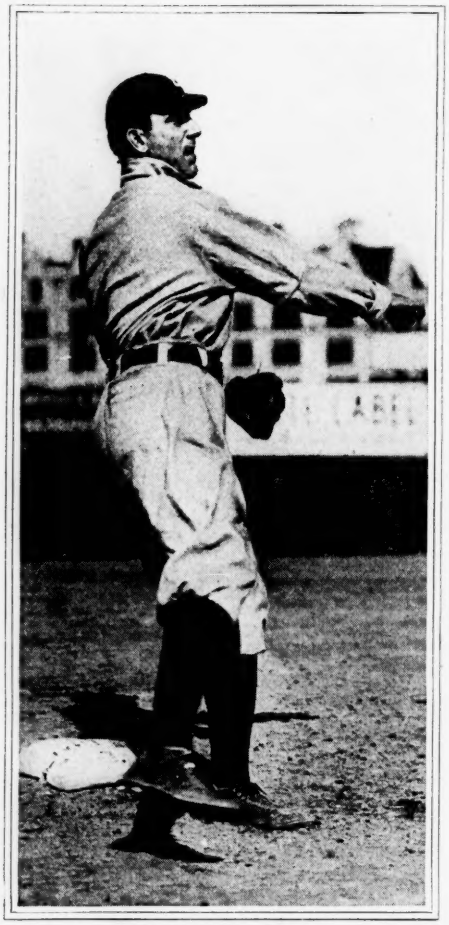
JOE JACKSON
A left fielder and a natural batsman, but his true home was the backwoods



HAL CHASE
A first sacker whose left hand prowess made third base a mirage to runners



TYRUS RAYMOND COBB
The "Georgia Peach," a star outfielder whose flashing spikes were the bane of basemen



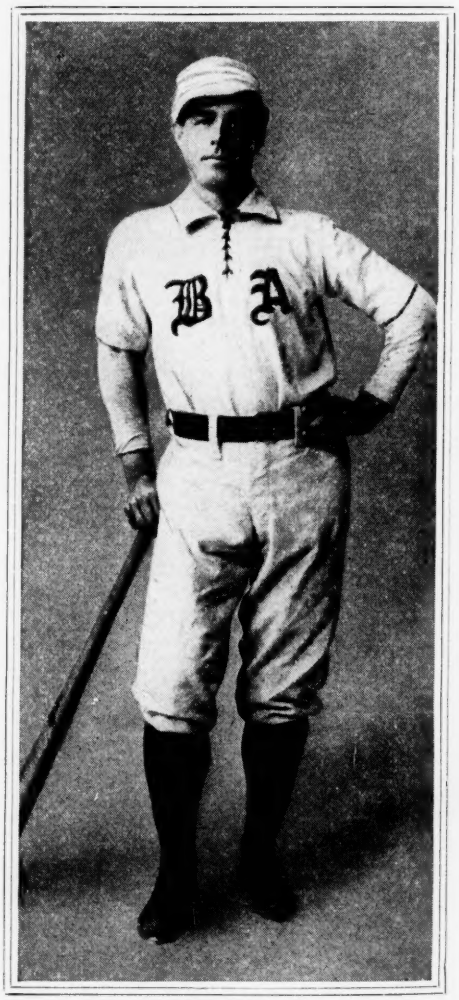
NAPOLEON LAJOIE
A second baseman who was rhythm and power personified on the diamond

doesn't know about Babe Ruth!

The years intervening between these two tableaux were full ones for the Babe, spiced with the glamour of achievement, embittered by dashes of disillusionment. He earned fabulous sums through the commercial exploitation of his name in pursuits not allied with his profession. He squandered these earnings prodigally, race track parasites swallowing at least a quarter of a million Ruthian dollars. On one race he lost thirty-five thousand cold cash.

Ruth does nothing half-heartedly. He strikes out with the same wholesouled abandon with which he blasts the ball over the grand stand roof. Pop-eyed fans get as much of a kick out of seeing him flail the empty air with Thorlike blows as they do when he smacks the ball flush on the end of his Homeric bat and whangs it out of the park. His is the "divine fury" that characterized Jim Braid's golf drive.

Americans worship at the shrine of



JIMMY COLLINS
A third baseman whose specialty was one-handed pick-ups and snap throws

swat. Ruth's baseball fame does not rest solely on the fact that he can hit a baseball harder than any other man who ever lived, but nobody can deny that it is his far-flung home runs which appeal to mob psychology, awaken atavistic impulses in the breast of the mild mannered, white-collar clerk, and satisfy America's yearning for concentrated thrills.

Baseball men understand that if Ruth had never hit a homer he would still be an unusually capable player, but the crowd has eyes only for the ball that arches in a Titanic parabola toward the white-shirted bleachers, has ears only for the crack that tells of another sphere headed for that bourne from which no horsehide ever returns.

The greatest ball player of all time? Few students of baseball would pick Babe Ruth. The specialist in home runs must yield to others whose talents are even broader in scope.

Call Babe the greatest baseball gate attraction of all time and you will find no dissenters. As a showman, Ruth takes precedence over such colorful idols as Walter Hagen, Jack Dempsey, Bill Tilden, John L. Sullivan, "Red" Grange and Tyrus Raymond Cobb.

Ruth's showmanship is of the unstudied sort. His is an ingenuous, naïve appeal that moves even the confirmed cynic to enthusiasm. There is nothing "high hat" or smugly self-satisfied about the Babe. He is of the earth earthy, unspoiled by adulation, still one of "the gang." He doesn't have to strut, to affect "the grand manner." He simply has to be himself.

The crowd senses that Ruth would rather play ball than eat—and how he loves to eat! That expansive girth line bespeaks indulgence at the table, yet the fans revel in his gastronomic feats. His very faults strike a human chord. Ruth's public likes him the better for his rebellious outbreaks, his distaste for discipline, his spendthrift orgies, his irresponsible escapades, his sporadic falls from the water wagon.

Here is an idol who is the more popular because his feet are common clay. Scratch Ruth, the home-run colossus, the seventy thousand dollar a year man, and you will find the grimy urchin of the Baltimore docks. At heart he is the little boy of the St. Mary's Home days. Were Babe to grow up we should like him less.

Even cold statistics become graphic when they concern this American phenomenon. Figures shed their musty flavor when you read that Ruth has pounded out four hundred and seventy home runs during his major league career. They used to say that left-handers had Babe's number. They don't say it any more. Ruth has slammed the southpaws for one hundred and fifty-one homers, which leaves three hundred and nineteen right-handed accessories before the fact. The *corpus delicti?* Why the macerated ball, of course!

When Ruth belted fifty-four home runs in 1920, and topped that staggering total with fifty-nine in 1921, the experts decided that he had set a mark which would endure through the ages. They were still surer of this when Babe, after roistering his health away, slumped to a paltry twenty-five in 1925. That clinched the argument.

The wrote Ruth off as a "washout," to use expressive aviation slang. They printed Babe's baseball obit. Like Mark Twain, Ruth was later to retort "The report of my death is greatly exaggerated," but Babe said it with his bat.

The critics didn't know their man. They forget that from the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step for Ruth. In 1927 he was once more breaking pitchers' hearts and chipping bits of concrete off right-field walls. Ruth brought his home-run record to an even sixty that season—a nice, round figure which may tantalize sluggers for the next hundred years.

One is tempted to add, "and which never will be broken," until one re-

members what scant respect this Ruth person has for prophets. It seems safer to say that if anybody does top the sixty mark it will be the Babe himself. He holds the copyright.

During his tempestuous career in the majors Ruth has smacked out one thousand nine hundred and two hits, a collation which embraces one hundred and six triples and three hundred and sixty-nine doubles. He tolerates two-baggers, but would rather not talk about such puny things as singles. It seems that Babe occasionally does do something besides strike out or park the ball in an adjoining county. One of the best things he does is walk. Not that he cares for that form of exercise —the pedestrian's rôle is thrust upon him by pitchers who don't like the expression on "Black Betsy's" hickory face.

Somebody with a Babsonian complex has figured it out that Ruth's one thousand three hundred and forty-nine bases on balls represent twenty-three miles of free transportation. "I feel like a railroad president!" exclaimed the disgusted Babe one afternoon when the enemy pitcher gave him his third free ticket to first. What a batting average Ruth would have boasted had he played in the eighties, when bases on balls were counted as hits! His home-run output might have suffered, however, since the old-timers had a "dead ball" to deal with instead of the high voltage jack rabbit now in use.

Conceding Ruth's preëminence as a slugger, the fact remains that the rabbit ball, short outfields, and modern pitching restrictions have contributed not a little to his home-run exploits. The bandbox parks for which avaricious club owners and the exorbitant values of city real estate are responsible, have made a travesty of present day home-run hitting. A moderately hit high fly now carries into the bleachers. Three base hits have become more of an accomplishment than home runs —a truer test of hitting prowess. In fairness to Ruth, however, it must be admitted that the majority of his heroic flies would be homers on the Sahara Desert.

Ruth dramatized the home run. He was lucky in burgeoning to greatness in the era after the World War, when sport followers, their emotions flagellated by the stress of battle, wanted peace time thrills on the same exaggerated scale.

To the fever-heated generation of to-day the scientific low score baseball that delighted the fans of 1900-1915, makes no appeal. Modern spectators demand blood and thunder, all or nothing exploits, and Ruth gives 'em what they want. The squeeze play, the double steal, the drag bunt, the hit and run and other artifices perfected by the old Baltimore Orioles are wasted on the present day fan. He wants to see batters take a toe hold and swing from their shoe strings.

Ruth is the supreme exponent of the golf swing as applied to baseball. The analogy is exaggerated, of course, but Babe gives the impression of "golfing" his homers as he sweeps his fifty-four-ounce bat through a long, low arc. He lifts the ball skyward, whereas his colleague, Gehrig, rams it on a dead line.

Babe revolutionized batting styles. His advent ended the era of "choke hitting" and initiated the present orgy of swinging. The short, jolty chop technique, typified by Cobb, yielded to the round house, "Pier 20" wallop. Once Ruth's homers began to pack in the customers, every Tom, Dick and Harry abandoned the short armed cut for the free, untrammeled swing.

Ruth delivered under the pressure of a world's series where Ty Cobb fell down hard. McGraw's pitchers slow balled Babe to death in the 1921 classic, but he found himself in later series. How he got revenge on the Giant twirlers in 1923 is still fresh in the mind of every fan.

Ruth has played in nine worlds' se-

ries, batting above three hundred in five of them. He hit thirteen home runs in these inter-league clashes, on two occasions slamming three homers in one game! The St. Louis Cardinals were victims of both these explosive rampages.

We have Ruth's own word for it that neither of these "three-of-a-kinds" gave Babe his greatest thrill.

"Of course I get a kick out of every homer I clout," said Ruth, "and everybody knows I'd rather bat than field or pitch, but nothing I ever did with the stick gave me such a tingle of satisfaction as the day I struck out Veach, Cobb and Crawford in the last half of the ninth inning with the Red Sox leading Detroit, 1 to 0. Boy, that was something to gloat about!"

Nine-tenths of baseball's followers have forgotten that Ruth ranks well up with the crack left-handed pitchers of all time. Babe wasn't the equal of Rube Waddell, Eddie Plank, Rube Marquard, Herb Pennock, or Nap Rucker, but the earned run average of 1.75 made off Babe's delivery in forty-four games of the 1916 campaign is among the lowest in diamond history. Ruth had oodles of stuff on the mound. Had he been less devastating with the bludgeon, Babe might have scaled the pitching heights. Lack of control was his chief pitching defect. At that, Babe still holds the record for consecutive scoreless innings in worlds' series competition.

Those who rate Ruth above Cobb do so on the strength of Babe's record in the box, his admitted supremacy as a long range slugger being overshadowed by the Georgian's all around attacking value. When a chap is at once the home run hitter of the ages and a top notch pitcher to boot, as well as a better than average outfielder, and a passable first baseman—pardon the atrocious pun—it takes a superman to crowd him out of the "greatest of all time" laurels.

Ruth yields but little to Cobb in the matter of *élan*. Babe shares the Georgian's overweening will to win, his flaming zest for combat, his willingness to risk serious injury if by taking a desperate chance he may help his team to victory. Paradoxical though it sounds, baseball's supreme individualist is likewise a great team player. As Ruth goes so go the Yanks.

Babe has always given of himself until it hurts. He has lugged "Black Betsy" to the plate when he should have been in a hospital. Bandaged from ribs to ankles, he has carried on with Spartanlike devotion. Those who have seen Ruth make the "old college try" understand that some professionals play with a spiritual fervor which is supposed to be the amateur's prerogative.

Babe Ruth's integrity, his patent forthrightness, saved baseball in its darkest hour. Care-free, irresponsible, Babe may be, but pity the man who approaches him with a proposition to "lay down."

THE GEORGIA PEACH

"Cobb batting for Barrett!" That announcement by the umpire in a tag end of the season game at Navin Field, Detroit, in 1906, stirred only perfunctory interest among the handful of spectators.

"Wonder where Jennings dug up this fresh busher," observed a bleacherite. "Bet you he fans." *Blooie!* Even as the skeptic spoke the rookie's bat met the ball and pushed it smartly into centerfield.

Cobb rounded first, saw the lethargic outfielder meander lazily after the ball and toss it languidly toward the second baseman. That was Ty's cue. He spurted suddenly, tore hell bent for the middle bag, launched his lancelike body through space, spikes glinting ominously, hooked his toe around the sack, and emerged from a geyser of dust, an insolent grin on his face, to see the umpire signal "safe."

Cobb was off—off to a record shat-

tering career that has no parallel in baseball history, a career that wiped from the books the crusading marks of such immortals as Delehanty, Keeler, Duffy, Kelley, Lajoie, Wagner, Hamilton, Anson, and Barnes.

The spirit of attack incarnate—that phrase aptly describes Tyrus Raymond Cobb. A Napoleonic ambition drove him irresistibly forward. He wasn't satisfied to be a great ball player, with every fiber of his ardent being he yearned to be the greatest of the great; to set marks for future generations to shoot at.

Restless, petulant, irascible, merciless, Cobb metamorphosized baseball. He was ruthlessness personified. "Break ground or get spiked," was Ty's slogan.

He would have cut his best friend's ankle to the bone to reach his objective, and his rivals knew it. He imposed his will upon them, dominated them by the compelling force of his unwavering determination. They recognized their master, hated yet admired the man who bent them to his purpose.

Cobb epitomized aggressive attack. "The secret of his success," said that keen student of human nature, John McGraw, can be summed up in this sentence: "Cobb always tests the other man's nerve."

This mettlesome, uncompromising, truculent foe carried the fight everlastingly into enemy territory. With Marshal Foch, his motto was—"*Toujours l'audace!*" Relentless as a gadfly on a sultry summer day, Cobb never ceased tormenting the opposition. There were no breathing spells, no relaxing let down periods when Cobb was at bat or on the paths.

More than any other ball player, Cobb had the "killer instinct." "Head up and spikes out!" was his creed. A cunning brain, an unerring baseball instinct, motivated his every move. What seemed like foolhardy chance taking on the base paths was actually a coolly plotted scheme for dislocating the enemy's defense and demoralizing their players. Cobb precipitated more panics than any other batsman or base runner from "Pop" Anson to Tony Lazzeri.

"Get 'em throwing the ball," was Cobb's favorite epigram. He made 'em throw it—usually into the dugout. As a base stealer he stands unrivaled. There is no second. At the flood tide of his cunning in 1915, Ty stole ninety-six bases. All told, he pilfered eight hundred and ninety-two bases during his twenty-three seasons in the majors. As Ray Schalk put it: "Ty would have stolen my mask if it hadn't been strapped on."

Flashing speed, cagy judgment, amazing intuition, and perfect technique figured in his base running exploits. He originated the hook slide, whereby the runner throws his body sidewise out of the baseman's reach. This fall-away slide, executed with devil-may-care abandon, is exceedingly dangerous. Ankle bones snap like dry twigs if the slider's spikes catch in the bag. Absolutely fearless, Cobb took desperate chances, forced his luck, and usually made the other fellow pay. The reckless are seldom injured on the bases.

From first to third on a single was an everyday feat for Cobb. Occasionally he got all the way home when his befuddled opponents began to sling the ball around with more ardor than purpose. The statistics don't tell how many legitimate singles he stretched into doubles, nor how many doubles he converted into triples.

Cobb beat out infield taps that would have meant certain extinction for the average player. I saw him once score from second base on an ordinary sacrifice fly. How he loved to tantalize a susceptible pitcher by a clean steal of home! He was the king of goat-getters.

They tell an amusing anecdote on Wally Schang when that spunky catcher was with the Athletics. In skull practice one morning before a crucial

series with Detroit, Connie Mack was catechizing his players.

"Now, Wally," said the lean Philadelphia manager, "suppose Cobb was on second base and you knew he was going to steal third—what would you do?"

"I'd fake a throw to third, hold the ball, and tag the son of a gun when he slid into the home plate," retorted Schang. Mack kept a straight face in the general laughter which greeted that sally.

"Damned if I don't think you've hit upon the best way of stopping that wild man," said Connie, the ghost of a smile hovering on the corners of his elongated mouth.

To harass his foes from the base lines, Cobb had to get on base. This was no trick at all for the most scientific hitter since Keeler. A master bunter, a wizard at hitting behind the runner, Cobb could call his shots, angle the ball at will over first or third bases.

One afternoon Urban Shocker was baiting Cobb as the latter took his cut in batting practice at Yankee Stadium. "Let's see you hit one down the right field foul line," taunted Shocker. Cobb promptly obliged.

"Now knock one inside third," ordered Shocker, a bit chastened. Once again Cobb obeyed instructions. "Pretty lucky," commented the skeptical Yankee; "bet you can't raise a foul back of the catcher." Cobb was equal to this fantastic request.

"Duck your head, fresh guy!" warned the Georgia Peach. "I'm going to foul the next one into your dugout." Shocker ducked and Ty kept his promise. "You win," conceded the thoroughly convinced pitcher. "I believe you could place your hits on a handkerchief spread in the outfield."

Cobb was king of the "choke hitters." He choked his bat a bit and met the ball with a sharp, choppy stroke. A snap of his Houdinilike wrists sent the ball to any desired sector. Cobb could slam homers when he chose to lash into the ball, but mostly he employed a chop motion. His timing was flawless.

In Cobb's eyes was that haunted look which so often proclaims the genius. Men who are contented with their lot in life don't put forth the nervous energy that Cobb called upon continuously.

You never saw Cobb sitting still; no camera caught him in repose. Impetuous as Forrest, Confederate cavalry raider, Cobb fretted and fumed as he swung three bats defiantly on the side line, impatient to be at grips with the pitcher. Many an ordinarily stout-hearted twirler wilted under the threat of those three bristling wagon tongues.

Cobb was the nearest thing to perpetual motion the ball field has known. He was always burning up inside, yet, oddly enough, instead of burning out prematurely he held the pace in fast company longer than any other player. He outlasted even the iron men of the hardy eighties — Anson, Brouthers, Burkett, Beckley, Kelly and Delehanty. In stamina as well as in brilliance of play, Cobb smashed athletic precedent.

No athlete in history, not even barring Paavo Nurmi, has subjected his legs to a strain as severe and long sustained as Cobb. Continuous starting and stopping puts terrific stress on tendons and sinews, but Ty's matchless legs stood the test of time. At forty years of age he was still a star of the first magnitude, although his speed had naturally waned.

Let's feed you some concentrated figures. A thumb-nail résumé of Cobb's lifetime major league record reads like this: games played, 3,033; at bat 11,429 times; hits, 4,191; runs, 2,244; steals, 892 bases; grand batting average .366. Adjectives pale before statistics as significant as these.

In 1911 Cobb batted .420, his highest yearly average. Next season he hit .410. He waited until 1922 before crashing the .400 circle for his third and last time. Never once in his two

decades at the plate did Cobb fall below .300. Nine times in succession he won the batting championship of the American League. That's the record for both majors. In nine different seasons he rang up two hundred hits or more.

Cobb played in more games, made more runs, more hits, more triples, and more total bases than any other player in history. Ban Johnson calls him "the greatest of all time." Maybe Ban is right. An almost unanswerable case can be made out in Cobb's behalf.

Certainly no one will dispute the assertion that Cobb is the greatest offensive player baseball has known, the best batter and base runner ever to don a "monkey suit."

Cobb's weaknesses were relative. He was a good fly chaser, but not a great one. His throwing arm was only fair. He was erratic in handling ground balls. Defensively he doesn't class with such ball hawks and catapultic throwers as Speaker, Jackson, Roush, Hoffman, Welch, Carey, Keeler, Hooper, Duffy, Kelley, McAleer and Lange.

At a banquet given in honor of Ty Cobb and Henry Ford by the city of Detroit four years ago, the manufacturer of baseball records and the maker of motor cars were hailed as the two citizens to reflect most luster on their native city. The same enduring ruggedness which typified the world famous Model T also characterized Ty Cobb. The familiar flivver and the flashing Cobb have finally retired from active competition, but even this world of short-spanned memories will not soon forget them.

Municipal funds were voted to buy Ty Cobb a suitable testimonial. By a happy inspiration the city donors chose a grandfather clock—apt symbol of Cobb's enduring grandeur.

NAPOLEON LAJOIE

No one who saw Larry Lajoie's fluent rhythm at bat or afield can forget the lyric effortlessness of the Franco-American's art. His picturesque name doesn't ripple more euphoniously off the tongue than did his every posture on the ball field melt into a harmonious pattern worthy of an ancient Greek frieze.

Ruskin referred to architecture as "frozen music." Lajoie's batting and fielding might with equal propriety be termed "living poetry." Golf had its Harry Vardon, tennis its Hugh Doherty, and baseball its Napoleon Lajoie. They set the style, personified fluid grace.

It is difficult to write of Lajoie without using that hackneyed phrase "the glass of fashion and the mold of form." Afield, Nap made the most difficult chances look ridiculously easy. He covered the territory around second like a tarpaulin, yet no matter how far he had to travel for a vicious hopper, he never got kinked up in contortions, never lost his form.

Every pose was a picture, yet there was no striving on Lajoie's part for artistic effects. His gracefulness was innate, a part of this eye-filling d'Artagnan of the diamond.

At bat, Lajoie's was the calm of a summer evening before a thunderstorm. Almost casually he stalked to the plate, took an easy, natural stance, and a free, untrammeled swing. There was no hitch, no jerk in his batting style to mar its lyric symmetry, no discordant, eye jarring break in his Vardonesque follow through. Poise, a certain majesty of bearing, distinguished Lajoie as he faced the pitcher. Even his first name—Napoleon—didn't seem incongruous.

Lajoie ranks close to the top among the right-handed hitters of all time. From 1896 through 1913 he never fell below .324. In 1901 he batted .405. A giant in physique, standing well over six feet and weighing more than two hundred pounds, Lajoie nevertheless handled himself like a featherweight, moving with feline grace to cut off a

sizzling grounder. Nap's 651 two-base hits constituted a record until Tris Speaker slid past the Frenchman with 675 doubles.

EDDIE COLLINS

Eddie Collins didn't have Lajoie's physical assets, but McGraw, Mack, Comiskey, Dunn and other competent judges call " Columbia Eddie " the best second baseman of all time. Here is one of the few college graduates to attain the super star class in big league baseball. The gameness, courage and tenacity which Collins displayed as quarterback of the Columbia eleven marked his play at second base.

Collins was the pivot man, the irreplaceable king pin of two mighty infields—the Athletics of 1911-1914 and the White Sox of 1917-1919. Better than any infielder save Wagner, Collins exemplified the " money player instinct." He had a knack of delivering in the pinch, coming through with a ringing drive or an impossible stop when the game hung in the balance. He was a whirlwind on the base paths, getting away with eighty-one steals in 1910.

A master tactician, a crafty tipper of signals, Collins was likewise a brilliant mechanical player. He could go farther toward first base to cut off a grounder than any other second sacker. At pivoting on double plays, at working deftly with his shortstop, at slapping the ball on the runner, Collins has never had an equal. He was a natural born competitor, calm in a crisis, equal to any emergency.

Rogers Hornsby ranks with the great right-handed hitters of all time, but lacks the polished artistry that distinguished Lajoie afield as well as the wizardry of Collins at covering second. Superlative straightaway hitter that Horsnby is, he hasn't the all around balance to put him on a par with Lajoie or Collins, to say nothing of Cobb and Ruth.

Hornsby has hit .400 or better on three occasions. A consistent .350 man he may surpass the all-time batting marks of Lajoie and Wagner before he lays down the ash, but though he is a workmanlike fielder, his second base play falls considerably short of genius. An aggressive, two-fisted fighter, Hornsby is so dictatorial, so hot-tempered, so intolerant of his colleagues' mistakes that his value to his team is diminished. He is a driver rather than a leader.

JIMMY COLLINS

Baseball men agree that Jimmy Collins, of the Boston Nationals and Red Sox was the class of third basemen. His one-handed pickups of lazy dribblers down the third base line set a standard by which the Lindstroms and Traynors of to-day are judged. He scooped up the ball and threw it in one motion.

Jim Collins could go further to his left than any third baseman before or since, yet he was sure death on those cannon shot drives that whistle close to the bag. " You might as well hit one at a brick wall," was Bill Dahlen's tribute to Jimmy Collins's genius as a fielder.

It was Jimmy's gloved hand stabs of puny bunts, followed by his rifle barrel throws to first that sent tingles chasing down your spine. Intuition told him when to come charging in. He could anticipate a bunt as no one else.

I once saw him crossed by a batter who checked his bunting motion at the last moment and laid into the ball. Collins adjusted himself in the flash of an eye to this switch in tactics. He wheeled on a dime, threw his body sidewise, and made a back hand running stop of a drive that would have beaten most third basemen clean even had they been playing the normal deep position.

PEERLESS HAL

Hal Chase's career ended under a cloud, but ethical questions do not concern us here. You can call Chase any-

thing you please, but one thing you must call him—the most talented first baseman who ever stretched for a wild throw.

George Sisler, great player that he was and is, would appear stilted and mechanical beside Chase—the supreme artist of first base play. "Prince Hal's" skill transcended mere talent. He was a genius, a smasher of precedent, an unorthodox tactician who pulled the unexpected and got away with it. Copy book rules don't apply to such as Chase. He made his own strategy—brought off plays that would have been mechanically impossible for other first basemen to duplicate.

Chase had the lissome grace of Lajoie coupled with a flame that was foreign to the sedate Frenchman. Lajoie's feats appealed to the eye; Chase's exploits stirred the emotions. You sat enraptured while Lajoie polished off a vicious grounder; you sprang to your feet raving incoherently when Chase tore hell bent toward the plate, snatched up a drag bunt, and winged a smoking throw to third to nip the runner by an eyelash.

Chase was a left-handed fielder, as all super first basemen must be. A right-hander cannot make the plays that a southpaw can bring off. The latter is not off balance when he tries for a force at second after a put out at first.

A sixth sense told Chase when the batter would bunt. I once saw this paragon nab a wee bounder on the third base line and force a runner at second! Hal started with the pitcher's arm, executed a one-handed pick up, cut loose a plumb line peg to second, and nailed the runner by a gnat's wing.

That play couldn't happen—but Chase made it! He did the impossible as nonchalantly as you light a cigarette. John Sheridan, dean of baseball critics, writes: "I've seen many great first basemen during my fifty years' connection with the game—and Hal Chase. I'm willing to believe that some day there may be another Ty Cobb, but I cannot bring myself to think that there will ever be a second Hal Chase."

Biologists would call Chase "a sport." As applied in biology the term "sport" means a sharp deviation from type. Genius manifests itself thus sporadically. Many geniuses are unbalanced morally because of the intensity of their emotions. Chase's passion for gambling led to his disgrace, but his association with crooked gamesters cannot obscure the fact that he was the flashiest first baseman who has yet worn spikes.

THE GRAY EAGLE

Next to Cobb and Ruth, Tris Speaker looms above the outfielders of all time. Defensively, the "Gray Eagle" was the daddy of them all. No man, save his former team mate, Harry Hooper, could go back so far for a fly ball. At coming in for shoe string catches behind the second baseman, Speaker has never had a peer.

Speaker came close to being a whole outfield in himself. He had such self-confidence in his ability to run down any drive that he sometimes poached on the preserves of his colleagues. In the 1920 world's series against Brooklyn, Speaker ranged into deep left and right field to spear liners that were labeled "Triples." "Spoke" could go get 'em.

Doubtless Speaker deserves a rating as the greatest outfield coverer of all time. His lateral gamut exceeded that of Hugh Duffy, his range in depth equaled that of Hooper, and surpassed the rest. Joe Kelley boasted a zone of operations almost as far flung as Speaker's.

Tris's batting kept pace with his fielding. A consistent .330 man, Speaker drove the ball on a dead line to the fences, his bat traveling along a flat trajectory. He holds the all-time record for two-base hits, having collected 675 doubles during his dazzling career with Boston, Cleveland, Wash-

ington, and Philadelphia. Even after the suns of thirty-seven seasons had burned his neck a vivid crimson, Speaker crashed the ball for a .320 average.

Ed Delehanty was the Babe Ruth of the nineties, twice scaling the .400 peak. Even Babe has yet to match Del's feat of hitting four home runs in a single game. Sam Thompson, "King" Kelley, Billy Hamilton, Jesse Burkett and Shoeless Joe Jackson, the discredited Black Sox illiterate, must be ranked with the great hitters of all time.

Jackson couldn't write his own name, but he had the sharpest eye for a pitched ball of the entire crop. Nobody knows how far Jackson might have gone if he hadn't got snarled up with Cicotte's plotters. "Say it ain't true, Joe!" the dirty-faced urchin's plea to Jackson as he came out of the tribunal room, will long remain the most poignant phrase in baseball.

WILLIE KEELER

The most scientific hitter of all time? There is only one answer: "Willie Keeler." You remember Keeler's deathless answer to the reporter who pestered him for his batting secret: "Hit 'em where they ain't." That's just what Willie did. Nobody — not even Cobb—could place his drives like Keeler. At hitting behind the runner, at sacrificing, and at bunting Willie was the nonpareil.

Keeler's catch off Abbey of Washington is characterized by McGraw as "the most spectacular of all." Don't forget that the Giants' manager saw Hooper snag Doyle's wallop as it cleared the bleacher wall in the 1912 series.

Keeler started with the crack of the bat. There was a railing along the right field bleacher stand topped by strands of barbed wire. Keeler leaped skyward, courageously thrust his bare hand between the strands and speared the ball! He held it, too, though the jagged barbs lacerated the flesh.

Spirit? Ned Hanlon once asked Keeler why he laughed so much. "I laugh every time I think that you're paying me money to play ball," explained Keeler.

BIG SIX

Some authorities rate pitching sixty per cent of a baseball team's strength. It follows that the greatest pitcher of all time must come close to being the greatest ball player as well. Who was the king of pitchers?

There is a wide divergence of opinion. Those who saw Christopher Mathewson at the crest of his form in 1905, when he thrice blanked the Athletics in the world's series, are certain that his like never toed the rubber slab. A study of the records, and baseball statistics don't often lie, would seem to give the palm to Walter Johnson.

No pitcher ever won as many games as Denton Young, affectionately hailed "Old Cy," who chalked up 511 victories during his protracted career. Walter Johnson has more than 400 wins to his credit; Matty captured 372 games before his arm failed.

Games won and lost, however, tell only a part of the pitching story. Victorious percentages furnish an unreliable guide, since some of the finest pitchers receive wretched support afield and at bat. One must go beyond mere figures.

Young and Johnson had the loosest, smoothest pitching motions. After watching Old Cy breeze the ball over the plate in that effortless way of his you aren't surprised that he lasted so long, that he compiled a winning total which should stand forever. Next to Cy Young, the underhanded Joe McGinnity takes rank among the pitching box's iron men. "Old Joe" was winning games in the minors after he had passed the fifty-year milestone.

The writer, relying upon personal impressions, is inclined to agree with John McGraw that Mathewson was the greatest pitcher of the ages. We

can see him now, arms clasped behind his neck in characteristic fashion, a certain lofty dignity in his posture, looking over the batter as deliberately and as calmly as a chess master surveys the board.

"I never had to tell Mathewson anything a second time," says McGraw. "He remembered everything I told him. Within two years that amazing brain had charted the weaknesses of every batter in the league. His memory was phenomenal, a retentive genius that earned him a nation-wide reputation as a checker player. I saw him beat eight checker sharps simultaneously, moving his pieces blindfolded. To Matty baseball was a science as fascinating as checkers."

McGraw is not disinterested, of course, yet most baseball critics share his judgment of Matty, the dissenters picking Johnson because of the latter's blinding speed. Matty did not try for strike out records. A master at conserving energy, he regarded baseball as a team game, and deliberately relied upon his fielders except in emergencies. If his side had a safe lead, Mathewson eased up, bearing down only when the necessity arose. Because he husbanded his nervous energy, Matty was all but unhitable in the pinches.

Christy's "fadeway" was perhaps the best advertised of all deliveries. Having observed that batters could solve a curve which broke outward, Mathewson worked like a beaver to perfect one that would fall away toward the inside of the plate. Batters broke their bats trying to connect with that tantalizing fadeway—a ball that seemed to dissolve as though by magic.

Wild as a hawk in his early days, Mathewson practiced so faithfully that his control became a baseball byword. He went through one entire season averaging a single base on balls per game. Matty kept his "head up." He sensed a squeeze play coming and pitched out so that the runner on third dashed home to certain oblivion.

"I don't expect to see a second Mathewson," says McGraw. "Men who combine his coördinated talents of mind and arm are not born often, and those that have these qualities rarely take up baseball."

If Mathewson lacked something of Johnson's mechanical ability, Christy had the more analytical brain, the keener baseball perception. "Big Six," as Matty was affectionately called—the automotive industry had just perfected the six cylinder gas engine when Mathewson became a nationally known idol—struck out 2,297 batters and once went fifty-seven innings without giving a base on balls.

THE BIG TRAIN

"You can't hit what you can't see." That baseball aphorism was inspired, as every schoolboy knows, by Walter Johnson's "hard one." If Johnson had not possessed superb command of his smoke ball, few batters would have dared to stand their ground at the plate when Walter was bearing down.

No pitcher, not even excepting the idolized Matty, endeared himself to the fans of America as Johnson did. "The Big Train," with his easy air on the mound, his fluid-like motion, his brimstone flavored speed ball, his patience under adversity, appealed to the emotions as well as the eyes of the fans.

The best part of Johnson's career was spent on a losing team, pitching his heart out in a hopeless cause. This fact enhanced the drama of his eventual appearance in the world's series when Walter was far past his prime.

Johnson didn't depend on his infielders. No matter what the tactical situation, he tried to "throw 'em past the batter." How well he succeeded is attested by the 3,323 strike outs he registered during his prolonged stay in the American League. Twice "Big Barney" fanned more than three hundred batsmen in a single season. No less than a hundred and ten times he whitewashed the opposing team, aver-

aging better than one shut out for every four games won. In twenty-five per cent of Johnson's victorious performances the losing team failed to score.

Contemporaries of the stuffed owl, the Gibson Girl, and bicycles built for two will never agree that Walter Johnson excelled Amos Rusie as a pitcher. "Smoke!" shrill the old timers. "Why, Rusie's fast curve had more zip than Johnson's straight speed ball." There is no satisfactory way to settle this question of speed, although in justice to Rusie it must be said that modernists do not accord him the recognition he deserves.

Rusie may not have had more of a hop to his fast one than Johnson, but the hard bitten "Hoosier Cyclone" certainly had a wider breaking curve and even better control. When Rusie gave as many as three bases on balls in one game he was considered "wild." In 1894 he alternated every other day in the box to win the pennant for New York. Rusie threw the fastest curve ball that ever burned a catcher's glove. He had the courage to whip it in with the count three and two.

Grover Alexander, still wearing major spangles, ranks close to Rusie, Matty, and Johnson. Old Alex was never one to hang back when the boys called for "another round," yet his disregard of training rules doesn't appear to have shortened his brilliant career. Alexander's limber cross-fire delivery keeps the ball "on top of the batter," in diamond argot. They sniff sulphur as it cracks across their shirt fronts. He is a sidearmer with the lyric rhythm that characterizes "the everlastings."

RUBE WADDELL

Beyond the peradventure of a doubt, eccentric "Rube" Waddell was the greatest left hander of all time. Here was a pitching genius, an irresponsible buffoon who got more "stuff" on the ball than any pitcher yet born. Mechanically, Rube had no equal, but baseball was merely a lark to this happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care chap with the mind of a truant schoolboy.

Fishing and liquor were Rube's weaknesses. On the day he was scheduled to pitch you might find him trawling a line in some secluded lake or blowing the froth off a stein of Muencher, while the bartender roared at his antics.

Waddell would have given you his shirt. Parasites took his pay checks, but the Rube only laughed. When the mood struck him he could pitch hooks and dips that weren't "in the book." The break on his hard curve fairly knocked your eye out. His abnormally large hand—big enough to hide a billiard ball—enabled him to wrap his fingers completely around a baseball, thereby imparting weird twists and tangents that were physically impossible for other pitchers to duplicate.

Waddell led even Johnson in percentage of strike outs. On one of his good days Rube was simply unhitable. Always given to theatricals, Waddell's pet gesture was to wave all the fielders except the first baseman to the bench and then strike out the side in order. Naturally no manager would stand for this show-off stunt in a league game, but Waddell was permitted to indulge this whim in exhibition contests, much to the delight of the country yokels and the city wise guys.

At the tag end of his meteoric career in 1908, Waddell, supposedly passe, struck out sixteen batters in a nine inning game. Had he been temperamentally stable he might be ranked as the king of pitchers, but in that case he wouldn't have been Rube Waddell —the play boy of the baseball world. His foibles have given all subsequent southpaws a reputation for eccentricity to live down. A child off the field, Waddell was a consummate strategist in the box, epitomizing pitching brains.

Ed Walsh, who burned out his arm trying to pitch the "hitless wonders"

to a pennant, ranks as the greatest spit ball twirler of all time, with Jack Chesbro second.

Nap Rucker, idolized by Brooklyn fans, has had no superior at slow balling the opposition to death. Sluggers broke their backs biting at Rucker's tantalizing "dewdrop." Rucker's left-handed floater hung in the air as though tied to his arm by a string. Batters were nonplused by this aggravating delivery. "The ball comes up as big as a house, but it ain't there when you swing!" exclaimed Mike Donlin.

"Old Horse" Radbourne, who starred in baseball's stone age, had the endurance of an Alabama mule. In 1884 Radbourne pitched seventy-four games and won eighty-four per cent of them! Chief Bender, crafty redskin; Dazzy Vance, the present day strike-out king; John Clarkson, the curve ball wizard of the nineties, and Addie Joss, the thinking machine, rate high in any ranking of all time pitchers.

BUCK EWING

The greatest of all catchers? If you saw Buck Ewing in his heyday that question is quickly answered. Versatile Roger Bresnahan was the nearest approach to Ewing in all around value, but he lacked Buck's mechanical skill behind the plate, his matchless throwing to second base.

McGraw calls Ewing "Ty Cobb wearing a mask." Ewing's mentality equaled his manual ability. No manager was needed when Buck donned pad and mask. His handling of a team was beyond approach.

Ewing was quick to detect and exploit enemy weaknesses. He played most of the infield positions up to the hilt, stole bases cleverly, hit .300 or better nine times, and knew every batter's soft spot. An inspirational personality, Ewing lifted his club to several pennants.

Buck's round arm snap to second has been matched for effectiveness only by Bennett, Kling and Schalk. Ewing threw what ball players call "a heavy ball." It stuck in the fielder's mitt like a slug of lead. He had so much confidence in his arm that he would deliberately roll the ball away from him on the ground to tempt the runner to steal.

Roger Bresnahan was a jack of all trades. Did you ever hear of another catcher fast and cagy enough to act as lead off man in the batting order? Roger could cover the outfield like a fish net and handle any infield position as if to the manner born. He hit better than .300 and stole forty-five bases one season! This thickset, stocky Irishman surely belongs among the dozen greatest ball players of all time. Bresnahan had catching intuition, a flair for outguessing the rival nine. And what a scrapper!

HANS WAGNER

Chicago is playing Pittsburgh as the 1908 pennant race, the most nerve racking in National League history, nears its climax. First place hangs on this game.

The Cubs are at bat, one out, men on first and second. "Circus Solly" Hoffman connects cleanly with an outcurve. He drives a vicious hopper over second base, a smoking grounder which the baseman hasn't a chance to touch. It is bound for the fence.

The crowd rises with a throaty roar —a pæan of victory that is suddenly strangled, that expires in a sibilant gasp of surprise. Mouths gape open foolishly, eyes widen incredulously— The impossible has happened! Hoffman's apparent base hit has been miraculously cut off, converted into a double play that retires the side, leaving beholders speechless.

Only a superman could have reached, let alone fieided, that torrid sizzler from Hoffman's bat. Only one man in all baseball history could have made the play that stifled this Chicago batting rally.

At the crack of the ball meeting the

bat, an awkward-looking, bow-legged, round-shouldered, bull-chested giant, playing a perilously deep short field, starts to keep a rendezvous with the scudding horsehide. With clumsy, shambling strides he devours the yards separating him from a nebulous spot twenty feet behind second base. He leaves his mark like an Olympic sprinter, and gathers momentum with every Gargantuan stride.

It is a great effort, but seemingly futile. The ball is traveling too fast to be nailed by anything cast in human mold. Hold on a minute! Perhaps this ungainly mastodon is something more than human after all! Nearing his objective, the bulky shortstop launches his massive body through space.

As a panther pounces on the back of a fleeing gazelle, so does the Pittsburgh colossus hurl himself upon the speeding ball. His capacious hands, human scoop shovels, throttle the ball, squeeze it into submission, then, seemingly in the same movement, flip it to second base for a force out. The baseman pivots, dervish fashion, whipping the ball to first. A double play—the side retired—a certain run cut off!

Even the rabid Chicago crowd cannot withhold its tribute to genius. While the bleachers rock under this spontaneous ovation, the greatest baseball player of all time shuffles clumsily to the bench. He doffs his blue-visored cap — and Honus P. Wagner stands uncovered before his spellbound enemies.

Baseball is primarily a defensive game. On the diamond defense outweighs attack. Manual dexterity in fielding, handling, and throwing the ball is the very essence of the artificial game originated at Cooperstown by Abner Doubleday.

John McGraw, Miller Huggins, Connie Mack, Edward Barrow, Bill Carrigan and other profound students of baseball agree that a super-infielder must, *ipso facto,* be rated above a super-outfielder when picking the greatest ball player of all time.

It is conceded by everybody who knows baseball that shortstop is the most difficult position on the nine, outside the battery posts. The shortstop gets more chances, figures in more plays, exerts a more vital bearing on the game than any of his mates, barring pitcher and catcher.

A pitcher's value is limited by the fact that he appears in the lineup only once every third or fourth day. Modern twirlers, wrapped up in cotton wool, are apt to work only twice a week. The shortstop is expected to be in the game every day. He is a permanent fixture.

If Wagner had not been a superman on attack as well as the *ne plus ultra* of infielders, he would not be selected over Cobb, the greatest offensive star, or Ruth, the greatest gate attraction and home run slugger. When, however, you have in Wagner a man who hit better than .300 seventeen years in succession, who led his league at bat no less than eight times, besides standing in a class apart as a fielder, the conclusion is inescapable that the bandy-legged Pennsylvania Dutchman is the greatest ball player of the lot.

Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth haven't the manual skill to make the plays at shortstop that Wagner did. Hans is much closer to them on attack than they are to him on defense.

The greatest baseball player must be a wizard at handling batted and thrown balls as well as a catapultic thrower, a ferocious batter, and a whirlwind on the base paths. Baseball being what it is, you simply cannot pick an outfielder as your all time greatest when you have an infielder such as Wagner available.

Wagner had no weaknesses. He was a crack outfielder at Louisville. He sparkled at first base before being shifted to short. There wasn't a position he couldn't play — not excluding the battery points.

As a right-handed batter, Wagner ranks with Lajoie and Hornsby. Hans had a penchant for hitting bad balls as well as good ones. When he made up his mind to sock one the pitcher was out of luck. Wagner stood in the far corner of the box. He ran "into the ball," swinging with meticulous accuracy.

No pitcher could find his weakness. Hans hit any style of delivery with equal vigor, driving the ball on a line between the outfielders. He loved to nail a "pitch out" for a ringing double.

Despite his bulky build, Wagner was tremendously fast. He had the cumbersome yet nimble footwork of a grizzly bear—and if you think a grizzly can't run you'd better steer clear of the Selkirks if your trigger finger trembles.

Wagner's speed explains his miraculous stops of "ungetable" drives, but his sixty-one stolen bases in 1907 give the reader something substantial to visualize. Cobb wouldn't have turned up his nose at that mark. Wagner stole fifty-three bases in 1904, and repeated in 1908. He didn't look like a rakish whippet, but he surely could pick up those clodhopping feet of his and put them down. He knew when to steal.

As a shortstop, Wagner remains unparalleled. He played a phenomenally deep short field, crouched low and started like a sixteen-inch shell in either direction. Only Bobby Wallace could go as far behind third as Wagner to dig up a sizzler, and nobody could cover the ground Hans did to his own left.

What hands and arms Wagner had! The muscles swelled like Manila rope strands along his massive forearms. No wonder he could throw to first from apparently impossible positions and flag his man by a whisker. Strong arm shortstops are rare birds, and Honus was the rarest in baseball's aviary. Although he tied himself up in pretzel knots while snagging blazing grounders, his sense of balance was so nice and his aim so deadly that Wagner's wild throws can be counted on the fingers of both hands.

His awkwardness was an optical delusion. Actually Wagner had perfect muscular coördination, lightninglike reflexes, and a sixth sense that enabled him to anticipate the direction of a batted ball. At completing double plays the bulky Dutchman stands unrivaled. Old timers recall how smoothly he dovetailed with Claude Ritchey in the art of doubling 'em up.

Talk about the arms of George Kelly and Babe Ruth! Did you know that Wagner once threw the ball four hundred and three feet in a heaving competition at Louisville? That throw would have carried from the center field Polo Grounds bleachers to the home plate. There was an arm!

LEGENDARY HANDS

Wagner's simian hands are a part of baseball legend. They would have looked more natural on a gorilla than on a human being, but they surely made fielding no trick at all for Honus. He simply smothered grounders in those mighty paws, choked the life out of blistering liners. Any drive he got his hands on was snuffed out like a candlelight.

Watching the ponderous, grimly efficient Dutchman dig down for a grass scorcher you were reminded of a scoop shovel excavating a foundation. But if we give the impression that this Homeric chap was a cold, impersonal automaton we draw a false portrait.

It was the human traits in Wagner which appealed to the fans, his boyish exuberance, his naïve enthusiasm for the game which was at once his means of livelihood and his recreation. There was no trace of Lajoie's arrogant aloofness, of Ruth's blustering heroics, of Cobb's swashbuckling bravado in Hans Wagner's make-up, but instead a certain homespun simplicity, a calm,

unassumed majesty of bearing, something of that forthright ruggedness which marked Abe Lincoln. Wagner's greatness required no strutting. He was closer to the hearts of the fans than his outstanding rivals for all-time laurels.

Admittedly it is harder to pick the greatest baseball player than it was to choose the greatest tennis star and the best of all the golfers. In selecting Wagner we are swayed not a little by the testimony of John McGraw and Miller Huggins, disinterested witnesses whose composite background epitomizes baseball history from 1890 to the present day.

Huggins rates both Cobb and Wagner ahead of Ruth. The pint-sized Yankee manager gives Hans the edge over Ty on the theory that the greatest of infielders should outrank the king of outfielders.

Blunt spoken McGraw picks Wagner without reservations. "Not a doubt about it," says the Giants' manager. "Hans tops 'em all. He was uniformly good in the three major branches—batting, fielding, and baserunning."

McGraw tells an anecdote that illustrates Wagner's ingenuous, unsophisticated love of baseball. One evening in Pittsburgh, during a tense period of the 1911 race, a group of New York players happened to be walking past a vacant sand lot near the Hotel Schenley. They were tired and arm weary, since only an hour earlier they had finished playing one of their no-quarter-asked-or-given games with Pittsburgh, a game that had been decided by Wagner's hair-raising stops and devastating bat.

As firemen on their day off invariably drift to a fire, so these mature major leaguers halted on the fringe of the sand lot and watched two gangs of grimy-faced coal breaker boys give a vigorous if not polished demonstration of the national pastime.

An awkward, overgrown figure in shirt sleeves and long trousers caught the attention of the New Yorkers. There was something familiar about his form at the plate, his massive bowed legs, his heavy jowls and ham-sized hands.

"Say, fellers, am I going nutty?" demanded Josh Devore. "I could swear that's old Honus at the bat!"

Just then the hulking batter cracked a clean home run over the sand lot fence. And sure enough it was the Flying Dutchman, playing for sheer fun the game of which he was and still remains the greatest exponent of all time.



APRIL

WATCHET blue are young April's eyes,
White as dogwood her maiden breast,
Young and foolish is better than wise,
And early and late to kiss is best.

O there'll be time enough to sleep
When all the riot and rapture is done,
Let April kiss, though sad Autumn weep,
Kiss from the dawn to the setting sun.

Though bitter the fruit, the blossom is sweet,
O eat we our honey, love, while we may,
Ere the rose's petals fall down at our feet,
And the wind shall carry them all away.

Nicholas Breton

The image of this girl was stamped indelibly on Brent's memory

The Streets of Shadow

A serial—Margaret Hilliard, a daughter of the rich, kept a tryst with Death in a lonely park at night—But who killed her, and why?

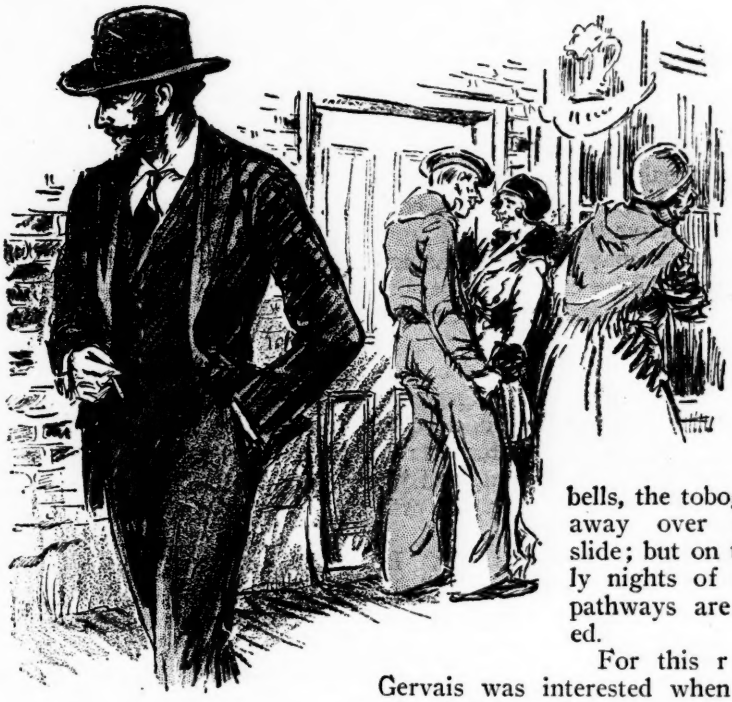
By Leslie McFarlane

CHAPTER I

THE DARK CAVALIER

CLOUDS drifted across the moon. The park was sinister with shadow. Trees creaked, dead leaves skittered, clumps of dry brush rustled in the wind. Mount Royal loomed black and gigantic against the sky, and at its base, in the deserted gloom of grassy slopes, the little green benches were forlorn.

Constable Gervais looked up at the gigantic cross that blazes its electric benediction upon Montreal from the summit of the mountain. He felt the little tingle of awe that he always experienced when he saw the immense symbol that appeared suspended between heaven and earth, stark and terrible against the sky. It was odd, he



reflected, that, although the cross was usually comforting and friendly, on autumn evenings such as this it seemed forbidding and austere.

He shrugged. It was all in the weather.

The park was dismal these nights, and the mountain was a dreary place. No wonder the blazing cross lacked its customary warmth. Gervais was a devout man, and as his heavy boots resounded *clop-clop* on the pavement he mused on his chances of a glorious resurrection and toyed gloomily with thoughts of the death that comes like a blighting wind to leaves and men alike.

That was the effect the cross had on him now. He wasn't quite as cheerful as usual. The park is at its worst in autumn. In spring and summer there are the strolling couples, the whispering lovers, and up on the mountain driveway the carriages and clattering horses; in winter there are the snowshoes, the sleighs with jangling bells, the tobogganists away over on the slide; but on the chilly nights of fall the pathways are deserted.

For this reason Gervais was interested when a girl, who had been walking quickly down the street toward him, left the pavement and went up one of the rustling, shadowy paths. There was a light just at that point, and in its radiance he could see her quite clearly. She wore a neat little red hat and a fawn-colored coat; he had a distinct impression that she was young and very pretty.

Then she went into the gloom of the path under the trees, dead leaves brushed aside by her twinkling little shoes.

It was not very late, but he took particular notice of the girl because few people came to the park these evenings, and seldom a young girl alone. He reasoned, however, that she was doubtless going to meet her lover, and he would have put the matter from his mind had it not been for the appearance of a man who turned swiftly around a clump of bushes that obscured a bend in the street.

The newcomer moved into the light with a certain deadly grace, as lithe and silent as some beast of prey, and

it was not until he caught sight of Gervais that he slackened his speed. Then, with an obvious effort at nonchalance, he slowed down to an idle stroll.

A subtle aura of evil clung to the dark figure as he passed Gervais. The man's keen, pallid face, the smooth silence of his gait, aroused the constable's instinctive hostility.

Psychiatrists may differ on the existence of a definite criminal type, but in the mind of Constable Gervais there was no doubt. He always maintained that the habitual criminal could be distinguished at a glance. Intelligent police officers, he firmly believed, develop a sort of sixth sense in this respect; he considered himself intelligent, and his sixth sense told him that this man was of the enemy.

They eyed one another warily. In the pallid man's sidelong glance there was a lurking defiance, as though he had said aloud: "You may think what you like. You have nothing against me."

And by the same subtle language, in which no word was spoken, Gervais told the stranger: "Be very careful, my friend. I have my eye on you."

The constable strode ponderously ahead. He vanished beyond the clump of trees at the bend. There, however, he halted. He stepped off the pavement into the dry turf, returned toward the bushes. Sheltered by the mass of branches, he watched the man.

The fellow had stopped. He was looking back. He seemed to be deciding something. Then, as though he had made up his mind, he turned and sped swiftly toward the entrance of the path.

The gloom engulfed him as it had engulfed the girl.

It was never the policy of Gervais to interfere with lovers, but he was quite convinced that this was not a rendezvous. In the first place, the girl was obviously of a class remote in the social scale from that of the man. One could tell that at a glance. And, in the second case, he had been following her with a predatory intensity that could not be mistaken.

Gervais went back to the path.

To his surprise he found that the girl had not ventured far into the depths of the park. He could just distinguish the vague blur of the fawn-colored coat. The man was approaching her.

The constable's feet crunched in the gravel as he strode up the path.

As he drew near, he saw that the girl was frightened. She was twisting and untwisting her gloves in her hands, and even in the gloom he saw the expression of panic on her face.

The man watched him sullenly.

"Well?" growled Gervais.

The man shuffled uneasily.

"What's the matter?" he demanded in a metallic voice.

"That's what I want to know." Gervais turned to the girl. "Is this fellow annoyin' you, miss?"

"I didn't say nothin'," whined the man. "I never said a word to her."

The moon emerged from behind a cloud just then, cold silver beyond the tracery of branches, and in its pallid glow the head and shoulders of the fellow were revealed. His face was gray and tense.

"He followed me in here," said the girl, hesitantly. She had a low, musical voice.

"I gotta right to walk on the path. I didn't say nothin'."

"You got no right to annoy girls. Was he botherin' you, miss? Say the word, and I'll run him in."

She seemed nervous and agitated.

"No. Please don't do that. I don't want any trouble. I was just—it doesn't matter. He didn't speak to me."

The man appeared relieved. Evidently he had been expecting the worst.

"You see!" he said impudently. "She says herself that I wasn't annoyin' her."

Gervais was disconcerted.

"None of your lip, or I'll run you in as a vag."

The man thrust his hand into a side pocket and produced a few silver coins which he jingled mockingly.

"There's my visible means of support. You've got me all wrong, cop. All wrong. The park is free. I got a right to walk here if I want to."

"Well, then—walk!"

"Sure. I'll keep right on the way I was goin'. That all right with you?"

"Beat it!"

The man wheeled about and strode jauntily up the path. With a puzzled glance at the distressed face of the girl, Constable Gervais turned back toward the street.

"Thank you very much, officer," she said.

"That's all right, miss." Gervais was annoyed because she had made no complaint against the man. He felt that he had blundered.

"I was really frightened. But I didn't want to cause any trouble, as long as you drove him away. After all, he didn't actually speak to me, although I think he was going to. I'll be all right now."

She made no move to go away. She was standing close by one of the park benches, in front of a dense mass of bushes.

"All right, miss."

Gervais touched his helmet and departed. There was something strange about the whole business, but it was evidently none of his affair. He went back to the pavement. Once he looked behind. The girl was standing where he had left her, in the somber shadow of the trees.

He wondered if she really knew the pallid-faced man after all, and if the fellow would return. Well, he had given her the chance to make a complaint if she wished.

The incident had been the only break in the tedious routine of his patrol that evening, and he pondered idly on it. Some strange things happen in the city. Thousands and thousands of people, their lives touching and mingling in the oddest ways—it is really tremendous, when you come to think of it.

You have no idea of the enormity of the city unless you go up on the driveway, to the Lookout, beneath the cross. There you can look down on the great, glowing ocean of lights, twinkling and shimmering away off to east and west, with a black gap where the St. Lawrence flows darkly, and then little clusters of lights on the distant shore, far, far, right to the black horizon where they can scarcely be distinguished from the stars.

That girl, now. She was one of the million down there, and she had come to this park, no doubt, to meet a man, another of the million, and they both thought it was vastly important. Constable Gervais, who was somewhat of a philosopher, wagged his head. And at that moment he heard a scream!

It rose high and sharp, vibrant with sheer terror, and it ended abruptly, blotted out by the explosive report of a shot.

Gervais stiffened, whirled about, peered into the whispering gloom of the park. Then he broke into a run, pounding along the pavement, back toward the path he had just quitted. The scream and the shot seemed to emanate from the place where he had left the girl.

He reached the path.

Among the dead leaves beside the bench, at the foot of the massed bushes, he saw the fawn coat, the little red hat. The girl lay motionless and silent beside the path. Gervais had almost reached the huddled form when he heard a sharp snapping of twigs and branches, the thud of footsteps and the scuffling of leaves farther ahead.

He plunged past the body by the bushes, and ran on up the path. Then, over to one side, he heard the footsteps again. He went scrambling through a thicket. Away off in the gloom beneath the trees he saw an in-

distinct figure, running swiftly.

Gervais whipped out his revolver.

"Stop!"

Head down, racing toward the friendly shadows, the fugitive paid no heed.

Gervais fired a shot over the man's head. The fellow did not stop. He dodged to one side, plunging into the undergrowth. Gervais lost sight of him, but stumbled across the grass in pursuit.

The fugitive had miscalculated. He was hampered by the clinging bushes. There was a tremendous commotion as he strove to free himself. Gervais came up just as the man lurched wildly out of the crackling tangle. The fellow tripped over a root and went sprawling.

Gervais pounced on him as he groaned and struggled to rise. He clapped a heavy hand on the man's shoulder and dragged him to his feet.

"All right," snarled the prisoner. "What's it all about?"

The same metallic voice. Gervais peered at him. In the dim light he distinguished the hard features of the man he had accosted on the path.

"You again, eh? Come out here!"

He hustled his captive out into the open.

"Honest to God, officer, I don't know nothin' about it," the fellow blurted. "I went right away like you told me to, and—"

"Shut up!"

Gervais ran his hands expertly over the man's pockets. He encountered a suspicious bulge, and on investigation discovered a heavy automatic.

"That," he said, with satisfaction, "fixes you."

The prisoner was silent. Gervais snapped handcuffs about his wrists. "Come along!" He gripped his captive by one arm and jostled him roughly across the grass.

"So it was a bumpin' off, was it?" Gervais said grimly.

"I never done it, I tell you."

"You're under arrest," the constable told him, in the formula. "Anything you say may be used against you."

The fellow plodded along with a docile, sullen resignation. Once in a while the steel links jangled.

Gervais hastened. He could still hear that dreadful scream, like a shaft of steel piercing the cloak of night. Dead gray grass swayed in the wind. The open sward, vivid under the ghostly moon, was bare.

They reached the path. Here the prisoner's steps became more reluctant.

The girl still lay among the leaves beside the bench.

Gervais switched on his flash light.

Dead in the center of its circular radiance she lay, head flung back, fists clenched, and the impudent little red hat awry.

Very carefully, so as not to obliterate possible footprints in the gravel, the constable crouched over her.

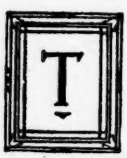
His prisoner stood gloomily submissive, like a statue in the moonlight, his head bowed, his shackles reflecting little glints of silver.

Gervais looked down at the dead face of the girl. Pity and wrath gripped him. He muttered something in a husky voice.

She was beautiful, and she had died in fear.

CHAPTER II

AN OPEN-AND-SHUT CASE



HE afternoon business in the Fleur de Lis Tavern did not properly begin until Mr. Michael Brent slipped into his favorite chair at his usual table and quaffed his customary mug of dark beer, medium.

The afternoon business for Mr. Michael Brent did not properly begin until the rite at the Fleur de Lis had been concluded, and inasmuch as the fame of the tavern's special brew of

dark beer had spread among Mr. Brent's cronies and kindred spirits, often luring them to the place at indecently early hours to begin the day's guzzling, it was frequently well on in the afternoon before the lawyer clambered the stairs of the old stone building across the road and entered his office.

In this two-room lair, the windows of which were apparently never washed, and the desks seemingly never cleared of a wilderness of papers, lurked Minton.

A word as to Minton.

His value, the lawyer often asserted, was above rubies. He was Michael Brent's clerk, stenographer, bookkeeper, office boy, messenger, adviser and confidant.

Minton had waded through a large legal library and remembered it all. He ordered his life by an invisible time clock. He did not drink; he did not smoke; he did not swear; he was a bit apologetic concerning his one vice of chewing gum; he was an elder of the church, and father of a minor domestic congregation numbering seven.

Minton wrote excellent briefs, handled all Brent's office routine, and never asked for an increase in salary. He had innocent eyes, scanty hair, big ears, a small mouth, a meek expression and an Adam's apple that bobbled when he talked, which was seldom.

"The perfect clerk!" said Michael Brent, discussing this treasure with his crony, Dryborough, owner of the secondhand bookshop across the way. "He looks after the detail. I do the heavy thinking."

Dryborough, a fat little man who always looked sadder and wearier than any fat little man has a right to look, raised his mug of dark (large) and sniffed.

"You mean he looks after the work, and you do the heavy drinking."

"I don't drink. I like beer, but I don't drink."

Dryborough ignored this sophistry.

"Some day," he said, "that paragon of meekness and efficiency will get wise to himself and go work for somebody else. Then where will you be?"

Having delivered himself of this prophecy and propounded this inquiry, Dryborough squinted sorrowfully into his beer, sighed and took a gurgling drink.

"In the first place," answered Brent, smoothing his neat black beard, "Minton will never leave me."

"Don't be too sure."

"He is perfectly happy and contented where he is. Minton has found his predestined niche in the social structure. He is well paid, we understand each other, he enjoys his work, and I see that he gets lots of it."

"I have no doubt of that."

"In the second place, if Minton ever *should* leave me, which is absurd, I would simply get another clerk. I would not get one quite as admirable as Minton, but I would get a good one. The woods are full of earnest, industrious toilers who have an enormous capacity for detail, but who lack the broader vision."

Michael Brent thereupon took a sip of beer, with an air of great complacency. He was a picturesque, genial-looking man with twinkling blue eyes, a mop of curly black hair above a good forehead, and firm white teeth beneath his carefully trimmed mustache.

He was picturesque, first because of a beard in an age when the beard is in disfavor; secondly because of his attire, which was odd, careless, and suited him amazingly. He wore a soft black felt hat, exceedingly battered, a soft white shirt with a low collar that showed his fine neck to advantage, and a black silk necktie.

Although he was the *enfant terrible* of the Montreal bar, he did not in the least look the part of a man of law, nor would any one have guessed his age as being but thirty.

"Minton and I," he was saying,

"team up beautifully. He is a shark in the office, but a dub in court. The drudgery of preparing a case annoys me, but in court—aha! With Minton's spadework, with my generalship—"

"And your copious supply of hot air," suggested the crony rudely.

"With my command of language, I proceed to confound the opposition, convince the bench, move the jury to tears of sympathy or murmurs of indignation as required, and walk out with a verdict. Without Minton, I admit, I might not do so well. But then, on the other hand, where would Minton be without me? He has a head chuck full of legal facts, but who wants 'em? You can buy a library of legal facts for so much down and so much a month. I know, because the draft on mine is due to-morrow."

"Why buy a library when you have Minton?"

"I have asked myself that question over and over again. But, as I was saying, Minton's truly appalling stock of knowledge would be a drug on the market if he didn't have me to present it in its most salable form. Minton himself couldn't go into court and do anything but make a hopeless ass of himself in the simplest of cases. But toss him a dozen scrambled facts in a real estate tangle in the privacy of the office, and the man can do juggling feats that would surprise you. I could defend a confessed murderer on five minutes' notice and make a fair fist of it—"

"But ask you to draw up a bill of sale!"

"It would give me such a severe headache that I would have to hurry over here and tell Alphonse to draw me my usual mug of dark, medium. In fact, the very thought of it gives me a headache, so—"

He raised one forefinger in a gesture well known to Alphonse, who promptly drew the usual mug of dark, medium.

"Sometimes," said Dryborough, "you amuse me. At other times you give me a pain. You call yourself a lawyer, but you act like a son of the idle rich, and you dress like the movie idea of an artist. Or is it a Bolshevik? I confess that it puzzles me. Why don't you shave?"

Pleased, the subject of these remarks glanced at his reflection in the mirror and fondled the black beard lovingly.

"Frankly, I don't like shaving. I'm too lazy. But I try to convince myself that it is because I believe the Creator meant that men should be bearded. And then, the average jury has a tremendous respect for a lawyer with a beard. It gives me added years, dignity and wisdom. When I was first called to the bar, I was very shy—"

"Impossible!" breathed Dryborough.

"It's a fact. I lacked confidence. But I found that behind the protection of a beard, my other self had a chance to assert itself. I also found that I picked up a number of clients, who mistook me for a Frenchman, who would not have intrusted their cases to an Irishman under any circumstances. That disposes of the beard and this very elegant mustache. As for my black hat, my silk tie, and my annoying habit of always finding you in the tavern when you should be in your shop—"

Michael Brent's explanation of these Bohemian details was interrupted by the appearance of Minton, who had entered the Fleur de Lis with the apprehensive timidity of a maiden setting foot in the red light district.

"What's the trouble, Minty?"

The faithful servant blinked reproachfully at his employer through silver-rimmed spectacles. "Have you forgotten the Lewis case, Mr. Brent? You promised to see him this afternoon."

"The Lewis case? H-m! Thank you, Minty. Thank you. As a matter of fact, I *had* forgotten the Lewis

case. I have a recollection of being dragged out of bed at some unholy hour last night by a telephone call from Hinky Lewis or a detective or somebody. The inconsiderate ass has killed somebody, hasn't he?"

"It's quite serious this time," said Minton. "Murder."

"Hinky is progressing. Last time it was robbery, wasn't it?"

"Five years, Mr. Brent. He just got out a week ago."

"He stayed out of trouble an entire week! Well, I suppose I'd better go down and see him. He was remanded this morning, wasn't he?"

"Yes, sir."

"I was busy in another court. I didn't have time."

"He is very anxious to see you, sir."

"All right. I'll be there." Brent waved Minton away, and as the apostle of righteousness glided off to the comparative purity of the street, he murmured: "I don't know what I'd do without that man. I really don't."

"I do," said Dryborough. "You'd starve."

Unperturbed, the lawyer beckoned to Alphonse. "To-day's newspaper."

Alphonse produced the paper from behind the bar, and Brent quickly scanned the front page. "Here it is," he said at last, and read: "'Girl brutally slain in Mount Royal Park.'"

"Your client is in deep," remarked Dryborough.

"H-m! Looks like it. Somehow, it doesn't sound like Hinky. However, we'll see."

Brent rapidly perused the newspaper account. A girl about twenty years old was shot, shortly after nine o'clock the previous night, in one of the park pathways. Her identity has not yet been established. An arrest was made: John ("Hinky") Lewis, thirty-eight, who had been released from St. Vincent de Paul Penitentiary just a week previous, a man with a lengthy criminal record.

Lewis was seen running from the scene of the crime, and was taken into custody by a constable who had heard the shot. An automatic was found in his pocket. One shell had been ejected. Footprints of Lewis were found in the path, close by the body.

Constable Gervais, who made the arrest, had noticed Lewis following the girl into the park and he had warned the man away. Less than five minutes later he heard a scream, followed by the fatal shot.

Brent read the account through to the end.

"I think you have a job on your hands," observed Dryborough.

"It looks like an open-and-shut case, I'll admit. No wonder my client wanted me down there on the run. I guess he's about ready to yelp for another lawyer by now. But I was so confoundedly busy this morning I didn't have a minute to spare—and then Hinky slipped my mind."

"Those hard-boiled detectives will probably have a complete confession out of him by now."

"Oh, no. Hinky is an old-timer. 'Beyond asserting his innocence, Lewis maintained a stubborn silence under a severe grilling by detectives at headquarters.' I'd better go down and see him. He'll want a little encouragement."

"You'll defend him?" asked Dryborough, scandalized.

"Of course," Brent answered airily. "A prisoner is assumed to be innocent until he is found guilty, you know."

"In theory. You know perfectly well that most people assume he must be guilty; otherwise he wouldn't be a prisoner. Your client may be an estimable and persecuted citizen, but if that newspaper account is correct, I think he ought to be lynched."

"How bloodthirsty we are this afternoon! The newspapers don't always get all the facts. Hinky is not a killer."

"Oh, no!"

"No! He's yellow! He might beat a woman up, but he wouldn't kill her."

"Charming fellow."

"Very interesting. I'll have you meet him after he has been acquitted."

"I'd rather have a ticket for the hanging. I've never seen a hanging, and this looks like a good opportunity."

"Long life to Hinky!" said Brent, drinking the rest of his beer. "It's too bad he's only been out of the pen a week. My fee will be small. Still, he has friends."

Mr. Dryborough shook his head slowly and helplessly. Brent was too much for him. Then he reached for the newspaper to read the account for himself.

Brent set the black hat at a rakish angle, patted the silk necktie, gave the little black mustache a twirl and smoothed the black beard that gave him the aspect of an amiable Saracen. With a flash of white teeth the lawyer bade his crony good afternoon, flipped a coin to Alphonse, and left the tavern.

CHAPTER III

A THOUSAND-TO-ONE SHOT

TWENTY minutes later, Mr. Brent was in conference with Hinky Lewis.

His client, shifty-eyed, and with the penitentiary pallor still upon him, tried to affect a lofty confidence, but was obviously frightened. The nervousness was in no way allayed when Brent, after hearing his story, remarked that it sounded very thin.

"Juries are saps, but it will be hard to find twelve saps who are sappy enough to swallow that one. Think again, Hinky."

"But I'm tellin' the truth, Mr. Brent," protested Hinky. "I never bumped the dame off. The flattie picked me up just because he saw me runnin' away."

"Can you blame him? Come clean with me now, Hinky. They got plenty on you. You were in the park."

Lewis nodded sullenly. "Yeah."

"And you were following this girl?"

"Well—it was this way—"

"Why?"

"Mr. Brent, I'll give you the straight dope on this. I was just driftin' along the street when this dame ankles past, and as she goes by she kinda gives me a look, see?"

"The come-hither?"

"Well, I dunno. I couldn't figger it out. But you know how the janes fall for me—"

"Sure. You've always considered yourself quite a sheik, Hinky. If a woman even glances at you, you think you've made a hit. You got it into your head that this jane might be easy pickings, eh?"

"Well, she was alone, and down around the park you often pick up some pretty swell frails. Anyway, I figgered maybe she was givin' me the eye, so I trailed along."

"You think well of yourself, don't you, Hinky?"

"She turned up into this path, see? And just when I was catchin' up with her, along breezes this cop. Well, he looks me over kinda nasty, so I kept right on goin'. But when he got outa sight I beat it up the path after this jane. She was standin' right by one of the benches. Well, I figgered she *had* been givin' me the eye, after all, so I steps up and was just goin' to pass the time of day, when along comes the cop again. He'd spotted me."

"He put the bee on you, eh?"

"Well, there would have been an argument, but this jane kinda stood up for me. I figgered I was in for it, because when I got close I seen she was a lady—a flapper, you know, but a lady. But she seemed kinda nervous and queer, and when the cop was itchin' to get his hands on me, this jane said there wasn't no trouble and every-

thin' was all right. Well, I was mighty relieved, I can tell you. So the cop buzzes off, sore as a boil, after tellin' me to beat it."

"So I suppose you came back again?"

"Well, I figgered the dame couldn't be very sore at *me*, and mebbe she wanted me to come back."

"Your conceit has landed you in a fine mess."

"I was just comin' back down the path, and I could see her a little way ahead, when I saw her turn around sudden, toward the bushes. Then she lets this screech out of her. Honest to God, Mr. Brent, I never heard nothin' like it in all my life! I was so damn scared I just stood there, stiff. And then came the shot. And the jane tumbled over."

"And you beat it?"

"I wasn't goin' to stick around. First thing I figgered was that it wouldn't look so hot for me to be nabbed right there, after the bull puttin' the bee on me a little while before. I beat it, but this flattie came up so quick I didn't have no time, and he got me."

"Where did the shot come from?"

"Near as I could figger, it come from the bushes. I think she must have heard the guy in there move when he stood up, and she saw him just as he was bringin' the gun down. She hollered, and then he fired."

"How about your footprints?"

"They got there when I come up to speak to this jane the first time."

"And the gun?"

"Well, I was packin' a rod."

"One shot fired."

"That's where I get a tough break. There was a little caper over in Verdun the other night, and I had to scare a guy."

There was a long silence. Michael Brent lit a cigarette.

"You're damned if you do, and damned if you don't, Hinky."

"If I don't what?"

"Tell the truth. If you cover up, you're hooked on circumstantial evidence. If you tell the yarn you just told me, they won't believe it. You haven't an alibi. You'll have a tough time explaining why you were following that girl around. Honestly, Hinky, it doesn't look good. It makes it a lot easier for me when I can believe the yarn a client tells me, but this one gags a bit."

"It's the truth."

"Come clean, now."

"I never bumped her off!" insisted Lewis doggedly, his voice rising.

Michael Brent had been looking directly into the man's eyes when he told his story; not once had they narrowed to betray a lie; now he sat back.

"All right, Hinky. I believe you. But it's mighty few that would."

"I got a tough break. Everythin' worked fine for the guy that did the job. The cop was so busy chasin' me that this other bird just walked away."

"The only point in your favor is that nobody saw you do it. But if they don't find the other guy, it's curtains for you."

The prisoner moistened his lips.

"They're liable to look hard for him, too," he muttered ironically.

"That's just the trouble. They've got you, and there's a nice, open-and-shut case against you, all built up and ready-made. They're not going out looking for more work. You've only got one chance, Hinky, and that's the chance that something will break to turn up the guy who did kill her."

"A thousand-to-one shot."

"Maybe we can shorten the odds. I'm going to nose around a bit. You don't know any more about this girl than what you've told me?"

"Never saw her before, I tell you. They ain't even found out her name yet."

"Funny they can't find out who she is. I'm going to trot over to the morgue and have a look at her."

"You won't throw me down, Mr.

Brent? I've come clean with you."

"Keep your mouth shut and sit tight, Hinky. I'll poke around and see what I can pick up. When they identify this girl I may be able to get a better line on things. I'll see you later."

He put on his hat.

"Don't run away, Hinky."

And, with this pleasantry, Mr. Michael Brent left his client and departed for the morgue.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE TRANSOM

LUCK flipped a valuable card to Michael Brent. He reached the morgue just a few minutes after the murder victim had been identified. Even before the news could be flashed to police headquarters, he was talking with the frightened woman who had recognized the body on the slab.

This woman was housekeeper of the home in which the girl had lived. As she answered Brent's hurried questions she sobbed convulsively, dabbing at her reddened eyes with a handkerchief.

The name of the murdered girl, she said, was Margaret Hilliard. She was the only daughter of a wealthy Nova Scotia family, and she had been living in Montreal for two years, as a university student, at the home of her aunt, a widow. The aunt was away from the city at the time.

"I didn't think there was anything wrong when she didn't come back last night," sobbed the woman. "She said she might stay with a girl friend. It wasn't until noon that one of her chums called up and asked why Margaret had missed lectures this morning. Then I happened to pick up the newspaper—" She broke down and wept hysterically.

"Do you know any reason why any one should seek her life?"

At first the woman could not answer. Then she stammered that the whole affair was unbelievable. Margaret, she insisted, hadn't an enemy in the world.

Overcome by shock and grief, she fell to sobbing uncontrollably. Brent knew he had little time, for detectives would reach the morgue in a few minutes. Apparently headquarters had neglected to station a man there to pick up clews, as is usually done in murder cases, which was another lucky break for the defendant. Even at that, whatever advantage Brent might gain would have to be gained quickly.

"A love affair?" he suggested.

Evidently this struck a responsive chord. The woman looked up at him, her plump, homely face stained with tears.

"She had. Oh, yes—she had. She had a love affair. They were engaged."

"His name?"

But the woman was weeping too violently to reply.

"Do you know his name?"

"Paul!" she gasped.

"His last name?"

"Gregory."

"He will have to know. Can you tell me where he lives?"

"It will — break — his heart," she said in a choking whisper. "They loved each other so much."

"His address?" insisted Brent.

"The Majestic Apartments. It's—it's on Sherbrooke East."

An attendant approached them, solicitous about the woman, who was being detained for questioning. Brent could ask her nothing more. He had learned something at any rate.

When he saw that she was being looked after, the lawyer departed quickly and unobtrusively, hailed a taxi, and within ten minutes arrived at the Majestic Apartments.

The Majestic belied its name. It was one of those shabby old stone buildings that rise in solid phalanxes on the residential thoroughfares of down town Montreal. It was the same to-day as it had been yesterday and would be to-

morrow; a house that differed scarcely a particle from the houses on either side and those that ranged away to left and right the length of the block—cold, gray and inscrutable.

They all had the same flight of steps from the street, the same impersonal bay windows, the same dingy card in the door, indicating that apartments were to let, the same air of having come down in the world.

In the lobby Michael Brent studied the inevitable card rack, and found that Paul Gregory occupied No. 12, which was presumably on the top floor.

So he went up two flights of stairs through the usual strata of cabbage odors to a more rarefied atmosphere where the fragrance was compounded of illuminating gas and the weekly wash. There, in a dark and narrow hallway, he discovered the door of No. 12.

His peremptory knocks, however, brought no response. He began to reflect that he had been unduly hasty. Gregory would not be in his rooms at this hour of the day. Probably, like the girl, he was a university student.

Brent was about to turn away with the intention of seeking out the janitor for further information, when he happened to glance up at the transom.

It was slanted at a sharp angle, at such a degree that the glass had become a mirror reflecting more or less clearly the interior of the room beyond. And although Michael Brent's first glance had been casual, he stiffened abruptly, then raised himself on tiptoe and stared.

Distorted, fragmentary and inverted was the reflection, but it was clear enough to reveal the figure of a man sprawled on his back on the floor of the little living room.

As the lawyer moved forward in his astonishment, the transom glass became transparent again and the dreadful picture vanished.

He recovered the angle of vision; the room leaped into view once more; there lay the man on the floor, arms outflung, face up—a dead body.

For almost a full minute the lawyer gazed at this astounding reflection. Then he murmured "Lovely dyin' Dora!" and hastened in search of the janitor. In a short time he returned with that functionary, who received with surly indifference the news that there had been an accident in No. 12.

"What kind of an accident?" he growled, fumbling for his keys.

Brent indicated the transom. "You can see the reflection. There's a man lying on the floor."

The janitor glanced up.

"Somethin' wrong," he admitted grudgingly. "Mebbe he's only drunk."

He opened the door. They stood on the threshold of the little apartment. The transom glass had played no tricks. A young man in trousers, slippers and white shirt lay rigid in death in the middle of the room. There was a queer noise in the janitor's throat.

"He's dead!"

"Who is he?"

The janitor turned a vaguely astonished face toward Mr. Brent.

"The guy that lived here. Gregory. Don't you know him?"

"I've never seen him before. I just called on business."

They stepped into the room and the janitor circled the body warily.

"Good God! There's blood here—look at his head! Why — say — he didn't just die. He was *killed!*"

"Murdered!"

"His skull is all caved in. Look!"

The janitor was gibbering; he stared at the gruesome object at his feet, with a sort of horrified fascination.

"And that's Gregory?" asked Brent.

"Sure it's him. Say—I'd better call the police, eh? This is a dirty mess. A hell of a note. It 'll be hard to rent this apartment again."

Brent stepped gingerly across the floor and looked down at the distorted face of the dead youth.

"Looks to me as though he's been dead for some time. When did you see him last?"

"I dunno. Yesterday mornin'."

"At what time?"

"About eight o'clock. I was sweepin' the steps. Gosh—to think he'd be lyin' here like this! The police—"

"Do you know what he did for a living?"

The janitor shrugged.

"I dunno. He was in an office somewhere."

"What time did he come back yesterday?"

"I never seen him. He usually got back about six o'clock and changed his clothes and went out to eat."

"But you didn't see him come back yesterday afternoon?"

"No."

"You didn't hear him? Didn't see a light in his room?"

"No. I'm downstairs mostly."

"You don't know whether the light was on in his apartment last night?"

"No. Say, mister, what's—"

"Did any one call here for him yesterday?"

"How should I know? People are comin' and goin' all the time, around here. I never pay no attention."

"You don't know if any one called on him last night? Some one *must* have been with him—did you see anybody coming into the building or going out that you didn't recognize?"

The man shook his head. "I was down in the basement. That's where I live. There was different people goin' up and down the front steps, but I never looked out."

"What kind of a chap was Gregory?" asked Brent, gesturing toward the rigid form on the floor.

"I dunno. He never had much to say. He paid his rent regular."

"Quiet?"

"Sure."

"Didn't give you any trouble?"

"No. He wasn't like some that are always throwin' wild parties and raisin' hell. He seemed a nice sort of a guy."

"Did he have many friends? People who came to see him?"

"Not that I ever saw."

"Women?"

"I never saw none. I don't nose around upstairs much. I mind my own business."

"How long has Gregory been living here?"

"About five months, I guess. What are you askin' all these questions for anyway? What were you callin' on him for? I'm gonna call the police about this, and you'd better not go away, neither."

Brent realized he could learn little more from the janitor.

"Don't worry about me," he said. "I'll stick around."

The man went over to the wall telephone and called police headquarters. While he was excitedly and almost incoherently telling of the discovery in No. 12, Brent looked about him.

The apartment consisted of three small rooms, living room, bedroom and bath. The living room had one window overlooking a dingy courtyard; it was plainly furnished, with a table, a bookshelf, a few chairs. One of these chairs, over by the window, was overturned. The lawyer eyed it reflectively.

"There must have been a bit of a fight," he said to himself.

The door of the bedroom was open, and he glanced casually into the chamber. The small bed was made, but carelessly, as though by a masculine hand.

A fragment of paper on the floor caught Brent's eye. He stepped into the bedroom and picked it up. There were a few words in a feminine handwriting. He read:

so please don't go any . . .
No. go for I am a . . .
dangerous pl . . .
that man . . .
love you too m . . .

Brent smoothed his beard in the characteristic gesture. He turned the

paper over. The other side was blank. The note paper was of good quality, and when he sniffed at it he was aware of a faint, subtle perfume.

He heard the janitor's voice: "You'll be right up, eh? No, we won't touch nothin'." Then the telephone receiver clicked, and Brent impulsively thrust the fragment of paper into his pocket. He was well aware that he should disturb nothing, pending arrival of the police, but this fragment of paper interested him, and he wanted a chance to study it further.

The janitor appeared in the doorway, staring at him curiously.

"Police are comin' up right away."

"That's fine. By the way," said Michael Brent, "can you tell me if Mr. Gregory made up his own bed?"

"I guess so. There was a woman came in once a week to clean up, and she made the bed any time she was here."

"When was she here last?"

"Day before yesterday."

"Then Mr. Gregory made his own bed yesterday morning?"

"Wasn't nobody else to do it."

"H-m! The bed hasn't been slept in. That means he was killed last evening."

"It might 'a' been this mornin', after he got up and made his bed," suggested the janitor.

Brent shook his head.

"I think he's been dead quite a while."

He moved out of the bedroom and glanced again at the corpse on the floor. There is something infinitely terrible in the spectacle of a man overtaken by death at the very height of youth and vigor.

The strong fingers were clenched, the lithe limbs were pitiful in their impotence; he was a powerfully built young fellow, and it seemed incredible that the flame of life had gone out of him. He was a man of about twenty-seven, tall and broad shouldered, with black hair that still seemed electric with vitality, strong, regular features, white teeth clenched in the death agony.

"Good-looking chap," remarked Brent.

"Too damn bad!" said the janitor, wagging his head. "I can't figger why anybody should want for to bump him off. Right in this house, too! And none of us heard a sound."

"He probably never knew what hit him. Caved in his skull."

The janitor grimaced.

"Rotten way to croak."

They stirred about the room uneasily, waiting for the police. Brent lounged over toward the wall telephone. The directory hung beneath it. Idly he glanced at the blue cover.

On it he saw a few penciled figures, dollar marks, circles and triangles—aimless scribblings that apparently were meaningless. But Brent scrutinized these casual marks closely when he saw dominating the maze, in heavy, black figures, the number 90.

Ninety!

His thoughts flew back to the fragment of paper he had picked up in the bedroom. "Number Ninety," it said. And here was the same number, scribbled on the cover of the telephone directory! It might mean anything. It might mean nothing. But he scanned the cover with a new interest.

A four-figure number, prefaced in each case by "UP," had been written several times — evidently a telephone number in the Uptown exchange. Then there were several diamonds, some large, some small, traced over and over again in pencil, as though done by some one waiting at the telephone for a connection.

Diamonds. They meant nothing. Everybody had some pet hieroglyphic; some people drew circles, some drew faces, some drew squares, while absent-mindedly scribbling.

Brent jotted down the telephone number on the back of an envelope and then gazed, with a puzzled frown, at

that heavy, black figure 90.

Had it not been for the fragment of the letter he had found, he would have passed over the number without a second glance. But now it assumed a baffling importance.

Heavy footsteps in the hall heralded the police, and with their arrival the case of Paul Gregory automatically became a public matter, a sensation and a mystery.

Two calm, casual-mannered detectives took charge of Apartment 12, briefly questioned Brent and the janitor, then dismissed them. As the lawyer left, they were methodically going over the apartment in search of finger-prints.

The machinery of the detective bureau had been thrown into gear, and experts, photographers and reporters were hustling on their way up to the Majestic.

CHAPTER V

THE ACE OF DIAMONDS

MICHAEL BRENT went to his office, where he found Minton working industriously, as usual. The faithful servant looked up mildly as he entered.

"A mystery, Minty!" announced Brent, flinging his hat on the desk. "A deep, dreadful, impenetrable mystery!"

"Indeed?"

"Does the number 90 mean anything to you, Minty?"

"Not yet, sir."

Michael Brent subsided into a chair and put his feet up on the desk.

"Not yet? Then there is hope. Put on your thinking cap and we'll ponder."

He took the fragment of paper from his pocket and gazed at it moodily.

"A girl was killed last night. She was shot, Minty. Just a few minutes ago I discovered the body of her *fiancé*, when I went to break the news of the girl's death. He had been knocked over the head. Our client, Hinky Lewis, is already in jail, being held for the girl's murder, and unless he can prove an alibi it looks very much as if he will be accused of the second killing too."

Having thus begun, Brent told Minton the entire story, interrupted by frequent ejaculations of "Dreadful!" as the clerk's pale eyes bulged perceptibly. He concluded by tossing the little fragment of letter paper across the table and telling of the coincidence of finding the number 90 scribbled among the diamonds and numbers on the cover of the directory.

"I do not aspire to show these very efficient detectives where to get off at," said Brent, after lighting a cigarette. "However, my job is to clear Hinky Lewis, and to clear Hinky Lewis I must prove that some one other than Hinky murdered the girl. The detectives, having a settled conviction that Hinky *did* murder her, will reason that he also murdered Gregory. My reasoning is that the same person who killed Gregory killed the girl, and that person—"

"Was not Lewis!"

"Exactly. Question—who was it?"

Minton examined the piece of note paper. "You think this should offer a clew?"

"It should help."

"H-m! Good quality paper. The lower left-hand corner of the page. Possibly, Mr. Brent, we could make a guess at some of the unfinished words."

Minton rummaged in a drawer until he found a sheet of personal stationery that he judged would be about the same size as the sheet from which the fragment had been torn. Methodically, he pasted the piece of paper over the lower left-hand corner of the complete sheet.

"Good!" approved Brent. "We should be able to tell fairly accurately, by the size of the handwriting, just

how many words would be needed to fill out the lines. Ah! There's our first line already. We already have 'so please don't go any' and there is just about enough room left for one good-sized word or a couple of small ones. The next line follows up with 'Number Ninety,' which is evidently a house number, so we can guess that the missing words were 'more to.'"

Catching the spirit of the game, Minton nodded admiringly.

"'So please don't go any more to Number Ninety.' That's it, Mr. Brent. That's it!"

He wrote in the two words and surveyed the result.

"In the last line," suggested Minton, "the last word begins with 'm.' Don't you think it should be 'much'? In view of the context I imagine—"

"Right! Put it down, Minty. 'Love you too much' is what we want. And we can take a guess at the broken word in the second line. You will notice she didn't write 'Number Ninety' in full, just the abbreviation and the figures. There is room for a few more small words in the line, but we'll get rid of one of them now. 'Afraid.'"

"'Number Ninety for I am afraid.'" Minton wrote it down.

"You say, Mr. Brent, that you think this Number Ninety is a house number. Then wouldn't the word in the next line, the one beginning 'pl,' be 'place'?"

"Exactly. It all hangs together. We're making progress. What have we now?"

Minton completed the word and handed the paper to Brent. It now read:

so please don't go any more to . . .
No. go for I am afraid . . .
dangerous place . . .
that man . . .
love you too much . . .

Brent was exultant. "It begins to make sense, eh? Now the second line, the whole phrase, is as clear as mud. Three small words to finish up the second line, Minty. Write 'em down. 'It is a.' Do you see?"

"Oh, yes. '*So please don't go any* more to *No. go for I am* afraid it is a *dangerous* place.' She was warning him, Mr. Brent!"

"We've got something valuable here. There's no doubt that this letter was a warning. Some woman knew Gregory was in danger. And that danger, somehow, is associated with the number ninety, presumably a house address."

"It disposes of the theory," Minton observed judicially, "that Gregory was murdered in the heat of passion. It was premeditated."

"If we could only find the woman who wrote this letter!"

"Miss Hilliard," suggested the clerk. But Brent shook his head emphatically.

"Evidently she was in danger, too. She and Gregory met the same fate. The warning might have been for her as well."

"But the last line—'love you too much.' The girl was Gregory's *fiancée*, wasn't she?"

"There may have been another woman who loved him too much. And in that case we have a possible murder motive lurking around somewhere. No, I don't think Margaret Hilliard wrote that note. But I'm going around to dig up some more information. If there was a rival in the case, we'll be getting somewhere. As I see it, I *must* find out who wrote that note."

"And," said Minton, indicating the fourth line of the message, "who is 'that man.'"

The two words had a sinister significance. Behind them loomed a darkly anonymous figure, a cowled shadow of menace.

"'That man,'" muttered Brent thoughtfully, as he donned his hat. "There are thousands and thousands of men in this city, eh Minty? And one of 'em is 'that man'! We'll hunt him out. We'll find him! I'm going

to talk to the housekeeper again and learn all I can."

All eagerness and excitement, he was at the door. Minton was as calm as the proverbial graven image.

"You mentioned seeing diamonds scribbled on the cover of the telephone directory," he said mildly.

Brent paused, one hand on the door-knob. "I don't think they mean anything," he said carelessly. "Just scriblings. When I'm waiting, with a pencil in my hand, I scribble circles. Everybody does something like that. Gregory scribbled diamonds. Some draw faces. The real clew on the directory cover was the number. Ninety!"

"Possibly," agreed Minton. "I was just thinking—of course it mightn't mean anything, but it's just a suggestion—"

"Out with it!"

"It just occurred to me that there is a taxicab company in the city that has a diamond trade-mark. Of course there may be no connection whatever, but it just seems that perhaps Gregory may have had that on his mind."

Michael Brent bestowed a look of approval upon his clerk.

"The Diamond Taxi, of course! Minton, you're a genius! When I find 'that man' and send him to the scaffold, I'm positively going to raise your salary."

CHAPTER VI

A LETTER FROM MARGARET

MR. BRENT sometimes claimed that he had achieved genuine eminence in the difficult art of loafing without boredom. His crony, Dryborough, would never admit this.

"When you have no pressing business in hand," said Dryborough, "you are undoubtedly the laziest of all God's creatures, with the possible exception of the great-toed sloth. But when you tackle a bit of work that interests you, I am reminded of a terrier digging out a rat."

Brent didn't like this simile particularly, insisting that inasmuch as work never interested him under any circumstances, nothing that interested him could be termed work, but certainly there was truth in it. Now that he had his teeth in the Hilliard-Gregory case, he was as feverishly eager as any young college graduate going after his first bond sale.

From an afternoon edition he learned the address of the house where Margaret Hilliard had lived. The identification of the girl's body and the discovery of her lover's murder monopolized the front page.

On his way to the house, Brent read the newspaper account of the double tragedy, but it held nothing that he did not already know. Hinky Lewis, he found, had been subjected to another inquisition, but had stubbornly maintained total ignorance of the Gregory murder and complete innocence in the death of the girl.

The atmosphere of the house was one of grief, excitement and dread, like an overwhelming shadow. Brent learned that the name of the woman who had identified Margaret Hilliard's body that morning was Miss Mills. The change in her appearance was startling. Her face was swollen, her eyes red-rimmed from weeping, she seemed dazed. The shock of the girl's tragic death had left her in a state of numbed bewilderment.

She explained, in a voice little higher than a whisper, that detectives had questioned her, and that the ordeal, coming swiftly on the heels of the dreadful experience at the morgue, had been so trying that she was not prepared to discuss the case again. Brent, sympathetic, said he would take up little of her time.

"You know, of course, about Mr. Gregory?"

The woman nodded. "I heard. It

—oh, well—it's all too terrible. Unbelievable. I can't believe I'm really awake, and that these things have happened."

"I went to his place because you told me he had been engaged to Miss Hilliard," the lawyer explained. "Now I'm conducting a little independent investigation of my own in this dreadful affair, and, if it isn't too painful for you, I'd be glad if you could tell me a little more about both these young people."

"The engagement—I shouldn't have told you. I spoke before I thought."

"Why shouldn't you have told me?"

"The engagement hadn't been announced."

"I see."

"It wasn't a formal betrothal. Margaret's family—" She hesitated.

"Yes?"

"She was afraid they wouldn't like Paul. Her aunt wanted her to break it off."

"Had she anything against the man?"

"Nothing, except that he was poor."

"And her people are wealthy?"

"Yes. Her aunt wouldn't let Paul come to the house. He was a lovely boy. Clever. He worked for a firm of architects, and of course he wasn't very well off, although he would have been some day. I'm sure of it."

"Gregory's people do not live in the city?"

"No. I think they are farmers."

"I see. Now, I don't suppose you know if any other girl was in love with Gregory?"

"Not that I ever heard of. He was crazy about Margaret."

"Any other chap in love with Miss Hilliard?"

"There was a man," she said slowly, "but she didn't care for him very much, although her aunt favored him. He took her out driving a few times, but she refused most of his invitations. He was a friend of her family."

"Do you know his name?"

"Mr. Starr. Pelham Starr, I believe."

"Living in the city?"

"Yes."

"A friend of the family, you say. Wealthy?"

"He drives a very expensive car."

"You don't know much about him?"

"No. Margaret didn't care for him. He drinks a lot."

"Did he know Gregory?"

"I couldn't say."

"There was no question of rivalry between the two men, as far as you know?"

"I don't know."

Brent switched to another angle.

"Have you any idea why she went to that place in the park last night?"

The question broke the last vestige of the woman's self-control. She sobbed outright, then pillowed her head in her arms, crying softly. After a while she looked up.

"I told the detectives," she said brokenly. "Margaret used to call Paul up often, whenever her aunt was out in the evening. Last night she telephoned some one—I think it was him—and went out immediately afterward."

"Did you overhear the conversation?"

"Some of it. Whatever he said, seemed to disturb her a great deal. She kept saying: 'But why? Don't you know why?' And then she said: 'Can't you possibly tell me?' And finally she said: 'All right. I'll go.'"

"You didn't overhear all her side of the talk?"

"Not the first part. It wasn't until she raised her voice. She seemed excited."

"And then she went out?"

"Immediately. I saw her before she left. She looked very puzzled and worried."

"She didn't offer any explanation?"

"None. When she didn't come back, I was alarmed, but she often stayed

with girl friends when she was out late at parties or dances. In any case, I didn't imagine anything had happened to her. Not until noon, when I saw the newspaper—"

She was on the point of breaking down again.

"Just two things more, Miss Mills. First of all, what is the telephone number of this house?"

She told him. It was identical with the number he had found scribbled on the cover of the directory in Gregory's apartment. That, at least, was cleared up.

"And now, could you find a specimen of Miss Hilliard's handwriting for me?"

She looked at him doubtfully for a moment, then excused herself and went upstairs. She returned shortly with a letter, which she handed to Brent.

"One of the letters Margaret wrote me during the holidays."

Brent glanced at the address on the envelope. The writing was identical with that on the fragment of note paper he had found in the dead man's bedroom.

He was not unprepared for this; nevertheless he was surprised. It at once shattered his theory that another woman had been in love with Gregory. He would have to abandon that lead, unless he found something else to support it. The endearments in that warning note had been penned by Margaret Hilliard.

Brent became aware that Miss Mills was looking at him curiously as he scrutinized the envelope.

"Thank you—thank you," he said hastily. "This is just what I wanted." He gave the envelope back to her and got up. "You've been very patient with me, and I shan't bother you any longer."

"I hope I've been able to help you. Do you know—if the police have learned anything new?"

"I couldn't say. Speaking of the police, perhaps it will be just as well if you don't mention anything to them about this talk we've just had." Brent smiled at her disarmingly. "Of course, everything is perfectly fair and above board, but I'd like to work on this case in my own way, without interference. Do you mind?"

"I shan't say anything."

The door closed slowly. Brent strode jauntily away.

CHAPTER VII

A GIRL NAMED NORAH

MINTON seldom offered suggestions, but when he did they were usually good. His remark that the scribbled diamonds on the cover of the telephone directory might have some connection with the emblem of the taxicab company bore fruit.

An obliging manager produced office records for his inspection, and Brent found that there had been three calls to the Majestic Apartments during the week.

One of the drivers was readily located and summoned to the office; Brent drew a blank here, however, for the man said his fare had been an old lady with a great deal of baggage. He had driven her to the station, and she had tipped him five cents.

Brent had better luck with the other drivers.

The first had some difficulty in remembering the call, but at last brought it to mind. Yes, he had picked up a fare at the Majestic—a young fellow. He couldn't just recall the fellow's appearance, but he was good looking and well dressed. Where had he gone? Somewhere on the Main.

"St. Lawrence Main? Just where?"

The man shrugged. He couldn't remember the exact corner. It was down around a bad neighborhood.

The records showed that this trip had been made at eight ten on the Monday evening before the murders.

The third and last record concerning the Majestic was for five thirty of the afternoon of the day Margaret Hilliard had been slain.

"The same day," murmured Brent as they awaited the arrival of this driver, the other man having been dismissed. "This may mean something."

It was half an hour before the third driver was located, but when he appeared he briskly announced that he remembered quite well his call to the Majestic Apartments the previous afternoon.

"Why do you remember it so well?" asked Brent.

The man fished a newspaper from his hip pocket.

"When I read about that murder up there I began to think back, for I knew I'd been up at the place some time this week, and then, when I saw this guy's picture, see, I knew it was the same guy."

With a stubby forefinger he pointed to a photograph of Paul Gregory on the front page.

"The same man?"

"Sure. I remember him from his picture. I was sent up to the Majestic, and this guy told me to drive him down on St. Lawrence Main."

"Where did he get out?"

"It was below St. Catherine Street, at the corner of Chat Noir. He told me not to wait."

"Chat Noir? I didn't know there was such a street?"

"It's a nickname. I forget what it's really called. Just a short street leading off the Main, down in a pretty tough part of the town. Some of us call it Chat Noir because it's like having a black cat cross your path to go down that street after dark."

"Why?"

The man shrugged. "Ten chances to one you'd get knocked on the dome—unless they knew you."

"You didn't see him come back?"

"I didn't wait."

Brent reached for his hat. "Drive me down to Chat Noir," he said.

Down below "The Main," that noisy, gaudy, jangling, colorful thoroughfare of cheap movie houses, penny arcades, chop suey joints, waxwork shows, fortune telling parlors, taverns, souvenir shops, dance halls and dubious lodging places, where the mechanical pianos and the sidewalk barkers are never still, where the electric lights are always twinkling, where a perpetual carnival blares to the open street and artificial lights and artificial music inspire an artificial gayety, where "Krausemeyer's Alley" plays on and on before shifting audiences, and the grease paint drips from the comedian's nose, where shills and suckers, harridans and hustlers, rubes and racketeers, dicks and dubs jostle one another on the crowded pavements—down below the roaring Main, he came to the corner of Chat Noir.

Ever afterward, when Brent had learned the real name of this sinister street, and when he had learned nicknames other than the one the taxi driver had given it, he still called it Chat Noir—the Street of the Black Cat.

There was something peculiarly significant and appropriate, because the cheap, shoddy thoroughfare had a wretched look, as though it seeped with misery and poverty and vice, as though the contamination of evil and misfortune might touch whomever came near.

Gregory, the driver assured him, had got out at the corner and gone into Chat Noir.

"I'll get out here, too," said Brent.

"I can drive you up Chat Noir, just as well."

"No. Wait for me here. I may not have far to go."

"Watch your step, mister," advised the man.

"This is daylight," returned the lawyer confidently. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

He left the Main, passed the inevi-

table corner tavern, and went on up the narrow pavement of Chat Noir. It was like stepping into another world. The roadway was cobbled, and two vehicles would have had trouble trying to pass one another without infringing on the sidewalk.

The buildings were of brick and stone, so old that they had attained a common dinginess and blackness; for the most part they were lodging houses of the most squalid type. Through open doors directly at the street level, Brent had glimpses of evil halls and rickety stairways; in some of these doorways lounged hard-visaged, unshaven men, or fat women with piggy eyes and untidy hair.

Out in the cobbled road, children with pallid faces and old eyes played with a sort of vicious earnestness, screeching like savages.

The street was so narrow that the grimy buildings seemed in imminent danger of toppling forward, and one had a sense of insecurity, a feeling that at any moment there might be a cataclysm of aged bricks from above. The old, old houses were jammed and wedged together, presenting a solid front of wretchedness; a little shop managed to squeeze forward with a proud display of unwashed plate glass, a flamboyant tin beer sign and a fly-specked assortment of groceries—one bright oasis in a desert of dirt and misery.

Brent looked for a number plate. The first three he saw were rusty and indecipherable, but over the next doorway he read the number, 74.

This was promising. He could not be far from No. 90. He was on the right side of the street, so he walked on quickly to the end of the block, where the number of the corner house was 84, crossed the road and looked eagerly for the number that had attained such significance.

He passed a brick tenement with two doors. The plate over the first was cracked and bent, red with rust; he could not distinguish the number. Over the second door was the number 88.

And beside the tenement was a vacant lot, fronted by a billboard advertising somebody's cigarettes.

Brent hesitated, stared at the huge sign, then hastened to the next house. The number was 94.

He looked across the street. A solid row of dirty brick buildings presented an inscrutable front. Their numbers were plainly visible—87, 89, 91, 93, 95.

There was no No. 90!

Brent tugged at his black beard. He had been so confident of locating the place that this unexpected development took the wind out of his sails. He saw that there was no use going farther, so he turned and retraced his steps.

He knew better than to ask questions. The people of Chat Noir look askance at inquisitive strangers. He would learn nothing, and might cause trouble for himself. Yet he could scarcely bring himself to return to the taxicab; his clew had dissolved into thin air just when he felt that he was on the point of gaining valuable information, and he could not get rid of the conviction that this sinister street still held the secret of No. 90.

Deeply puzzled, Michael Brent went on back toward the Main, toward the corner of Chat Noir where his taxicab was waiting. There was nothing for it but to return uptown and seek more information about Paul Gregory.

He had butted full tilt into a blank wall on his confident journey up this blind alley; there had been some little slip, but if he could only put his finger on the one fact he had overlooked he felt sure that Chat Noir would yet yield a solution.

He was near the corner when he met a girl named Norah, and her strange companion.

Absorbed in thought, he had been trudging along with his gaze fixed on

the pavement. The harsh voice of the man aroused him when he was only a few steps away.

"God knows I don't blame you for bein' disappointed, Norah, but I'm doin' the best I can. Where d'you want to stay? The Windsor Hotel?"

Brent looked up hastily, then stepped off the narrow pavement to let them pass. He had time only for a fleeting glance, but in that moment the image of the girl was stamped as indelibly upon his memory as though he had known her for years.

Against the sordid background of Chat Noir, in all its squalid dirt and misery and vice, her beauty had a quality that was infinitely appealing, her evident timidity caught at the heart. Her childish face, her dark eyes, the pink and white purity of her complexion, the delicacy of her features, reminded one of mignonette and hollyhocks and the scent of clover in country fields.

She was small and slim. Two little parentheses of silky black hair peeped from beneath the brim of her tiny blue hat, caressing her cheeks. She wore a blue dress and a blue coat. Brent, who seldom noticed women's clothes, saw only that she was dressed neatly and quietly; he did not observe that the coat and dress were inexpensive and had known much wear.

Michael Brent was not a lady's man, but he had a proper appreciation of the beautiful, and this girl had all the mystery and loveliness of one's first sweetheart. He was not so rude as to stare, but he carried away with him a complete and ineradicable impression. He would remember her, he felt, forever. This, in spite of the fact that he had looked at her for little more than two seconds and heard her soft voice in only a few words:

"I never thought you lived in a place like this."

And the man said:

"I ain't done so bloomin' well in this country that I can live where I like."

Then they passed on out of earshot. Brent had no clear impression of the man save that he was a rat-eyed little scoundrel badly in need of a wash, and was carrying a battered suitcase. A queer couple.

At the corner, Brent looked back. They were going into one of the frowzy lodging houses of Chat Noir.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LILY IN THE MIRE

MIDGE TAPLEY was one of those people who are born with a grudge against life. Nothing went well with him. Nothing ever had gone well with him. Nothing ever would.

As a baby, he squalled his resentment more vociferously than any of the other tiny beings who yelled their impotent rage against the destiny that had introduced them to life in a London slum like mosquitoes in a cesspool; as a boy he was sullen and envious, bitter and lazy; as a man he was confirmed in his resentment against "them," the shadowy legions of luckier men conspired to grind him under foot.

Like most men who gravitate naturally to the dregs of existence, he could explain it by blaming everything and everybody but himself. His life was one sustained, snarling excuse.

And now, as he ushered his foster daughter into a dark little room on the third floor of one of the most squalid lodging houses on Chat Noir, he whined his customary philippic against "them."

"You made a big mistake comin' out to this 'ere rotten country, Norah. I've cursed the day I ever left England. Look at the place I've got to live in. Look at it! And think of the nice little place we had back home."

Norah looked. She was dismayed.

The room was a cell. A small, grimy window presented a view of

roofs and clotheslines. The ceiling was cracked, the wall paper was peeling off in strips, the floor was bare; there was a narrow bed, a washstand, a dubious chair. It was a cheap room, a common room, a dirty room.

Tapley put down her suitcase and the girl sat wearily on the bed.

"You never told us, father. In your letters you always said you were getting along well. Mother and I waited and waited. You said you would send for us."

"How could I send for you? How could I, when I was hardly earnin' enough to keep body and soul together? Thank Gawd, yer mother had the little shop to keep things goin', or we'd all have starved. I'd have sent for you if I could, but how could I? Answer me that!"

Norah Gray looked at her stepfather. She scarcely recognized in this stoop-shouldered, bleary-eyed denizen of Chat Noir the jaunty, assertive, gaudy man whom her mother had married. In those days Midge Tapley had been cheap and flashy, but she was too young to be analytical, and he had seemed rather wonderful to her then.

Even now she did not realize the full extent of his degradation, but it was quite obvious that Midge had altered for the worse. He was a man of graying hair and unshaven chin, red nose that looked as if it had been given a polish, squinty eyes and blotchy skin, a scrawny neck and a dirty shirt, dressed in coat and trousers that didn't match, shoes down at the heel. His voice alone had not changed; it was the same thin whine.

"You promised to bring us both out to Canada when you got settled," she insisted.

"Of course. And I would have, but I never got settled. Wait until you've been here a while, and see how hard it is fer an honest man to get steady work. Just wait. Don't blame me, Norah. It ain't been my fault I ain't done well. You shouldn't have come out here, anyway, and if I'd known in time I'd 'a' warned you, so I would."

"Perhaps not." She looked solemnly at the floor. Her voice trembled slightly. "But when mother died—there was nobody. After all, you're my stepfather."

"Yes, yes," he said hastily. "Don't think I'm complainin', Norah. I'm glad to see you. It's my dooty to look after you, and I'm not the man to dodge my dooty. But if you'd told me in time I would have arsked you to wait a while until things got better with me."

"Well—I'm here, now, and I suppose I'll have to make the best of it."

"That's the spirit!" exclaimed Midge, rubbing his hands together. "That's the spirit, gal! Be cheerful. Everythin' will turn out all right somehow. I'm sorry I can't afford to put you up in better lodgin's than this, but I'm livin' here in this house myself, and I wanted you to be near me. When things are goin' better, we can move."

"I don't like it here," she said simply.

"Well—it ain't exactly a palace, Norah, but I can't do no better. Rents is high in Montreal, and I don't make much money."

"Are you working now?"

He looked injured. "Why, of course I'm workin'."

"Where?"

"It's a part-time job. I'm helpin' a man," he explained vaguely. "I'm expectin' somethin' better soon."

"Couldn't we move somewhere else? This is a horrible place. If you can't afford it, I have a little money—"

A glint came into Tapley's red-rimmed eyes. He rubbed his stubbled chin with the back of his hand.

"I wouldn't think of takin' any of your money, Norah," he said virtuously. "How much have you got?"

"About forty pounds."

"Two hundred dollars! That's a lot. Where did you get it."

"Mother's insurance."

"I never knew she had any insurance."

"She had a little. After the shop was sold and debts paid and the funeral was over, I had enough to buy my ticket out to Canada and have some left over."

"Have you got it with you?"

"Yes."

"That's a lot of money for you to be carryin' around, Norah. I won't take none of it for myself, but mebbe you'd better let me have it to take care of for you. I'll put it in the bank."

Norah Gray was not versed in the ways of the world, and her recollections of Midge Tapley had not been wholly unpleasant; she was only a child when he left home, and she still retained an odd affection for the man, simply because her mother had cared for him, in spite of his worthlessness. Nevertheless, the caution that experience teaches the poor bade her keep the money in her own hands.

"It's safe enough, I think," she said mildly. "But if you need some money to move away from here to a nicer place, or to help you get a better job, I could let you have some."

She meant it in all goodness of heart.

"You always was good-hearted, Norah. Even when you was only a nipper, I said it of you. Matter of fact, I *have* got somethin' in mind just now, and I ain't been able to handle it just on account of needin' a few dollars."

"How much do you need?"

"It all depends," said Midge judicially. "The more capital a man has, the better chances he's got of gettin' ahead. I'll take a look around and I'll let you know."

"And in the meantime, must we stay here?"

"There's plenty worse places, gal. Plenty worse. This ain't the Ritz-Carlton, in course, but people minds their own business—and it's cheap. Besides, it's handy to my work."

Midge did not enlarge on the nature of these mysterious labors.

Tired, disappointed, frightened, disillusioned—Norah was on the verge of tears. This dingy room in the heart of a strange city almost suffocated her with its ugliness, stifled her in an atmosphere of evil.

"It doesn't look like a very nice neighborhood," she observed faintly.

"You can't always judge by appearances," Midge said, with the air of one delivering a great moral truth. "It's pore, but the people is good-hearted."

He had left the door open, and now they heard shuffling footsteps in the hall. Norah looked up just as a man shambled into view; he peered into the room, standing in the doorway, his eyes blinking, his lips twisted in a thin smile.

He was a cripple. His right arm hung limply at his side as though it were withered. The hand was like a claw, dry and yellow. He was a homely fellow, with a sharp sallow face, and a shrewd expression. He looked narrowly at Norah as he said:

"Hello, Midge. Got company?"

Midge cast him a sullen glance.

"This is my gal," he muttered. "Just come from England."

The cripple raised astonished eyebrows. "I never knew you had a kid."

"This is her."

"Well, I hope she likes it here." His voice had a sardonic note. He darted a piercing glance at Norah, then turned away and went down the hall.

"Nosey!" snapped Midge, when the man was out of earshot.

"Who is he?"

"No friend of mine."

"He seemed to know you."

"He knows everybody. He lives here."

"What is his name?"

"Burger, he calls hisself."

"He's a cripple, isn't he?"

"One of his arms is dead."

"What does he do for a living?"

"He's a crook. Don't you go bein'

nice to him and givin' him no sympathy, Norah. There's lots of people around here I don't want you to have anythin' to do with, for I don't like 'em, and he is only one of 'em. But this here Burger is a bloody noosance. He's always pokin' his nose into what don't concern him. He didn't have to call to stop here and ask questions."

"I hope we won't stay here very long. I don't like the place."

Norah opened her hand bag and produced a baggage check.

"You've got a trunk?"

"I forgot to give you the check when you met me. Could you have somebody send the trunk up here?"

Midge took the pasteboard.

"Takes money to have a trunk sent up," he suggested delicately.

In silence the girl opened her purse and produced a bill. She handed it to Midge, who glanced at it and stuffed it into his pocket.

"Thanks. I'd pay for it myself," he explained, "but I'm a bit hard up just now. It took my last penny to pay the landlord for your room, and I don't get no pay till to-morrow."

"I don't mind."

"That's the gal!" said Midge, greatly cheered. "Some 'd take it out in bein' nasty. I'll make it up to you some day, that I will." He edged toward the door. "Are you hungry?"

"No, thanks. I think I'll lie down and have a rest."

He seemed relieved. "It 'll do you good. I'll go and look after your trunk." At the door he paused "If you go out for a walk, don't go far. This is a bad city for a gal to be out alone."

With this righteous admonition, Midge Tapley left his foster daughter and descended the rickety stairs to the street, tenderly clutching the crisp bill in his pocket.

There was a transfer company's office near by, but Midge did not go there directly. Instead, he stopped off at the corner tavern, where he made a barely perceptible sign to a waiter with yellowish face and roving eyes. The waiter brought him a glass of beer, and at the same time slipped him a little paper packet beneath the table. Midge handed over the bill and got back a dollar. He drank his beer and went into the lavatory, the paper packet in his trembling fingers.

Ten minutes later, with eyes shining and a feeling of great benevolence toward the world in general, Midge Tapley handed in the trunk check at the transfer office, paid the charges, and went out with the air of one who has done his duty.

"Funny the difference a little shot of snow can make," he mused. "I been needin' that."

He felt exhilarated.

"Wonder how much of that money I can wangle out of her. Mysto and me can make a neat bit o' coin if we only have some capital to get goin'. I wonder if she'd stand for me touchin' her for a hundred?"

He peeped through a tavern door and looked at the clock.

"About time I was goin' around to No. 90," reflected Midge. He hesitated on the pavement "There might be somethin' on."

Then he thought better of it.

"What's the use? I got a gal to look after now. Guess I can take a little holiday wunst in a while. It don't happen every day in the week."

Presumably No. 90 was deprived of Midge Tapley's company that evening, for he turned in the direction of the lodging house.

CHAPTER IX

AN ENCOUNTER WITH LABOEUF

WHILE her stepfather was out attending to the matter of the trunk, and incidentally treating himself to a deck of cocaine, Norah Gray sat on her cot in the shabby cell and bit her lips to keep

from crying with loneliness and disappointment.

She was pitifully young and inexperienced, a girl in years, but a child in her innocent outlook on life. Midge was all she had in the world now; she felt an instinctive affection for him because she was in a strange country, far from the scenes she had known, and because he was the only familiar figure left in her life.

That she should find him living in this wretched slum had been far from her expectations. Midge's letters had been infrequent, but they had given no indication of his descent. He was invariably on the point of leaving Montreal to take up land in the West; he was always faithfully saving his money; he was continually promising that in a few months he would send for Norah and her mother, that they might all enter upon an unprecedented era of prosperity and pastoral peace.

Of course a freeborn Englishman had a hard time in Canada; he always stressed that. The country was backward; people didn't do things as they did them in England; the Canadians were a stubborn lot, and were strangely independent of advice, although they were only a pack of ignorant colonials. But, even here, wrote the brave and undiscouraged Midge, hard work and ambition would tell in time.

Norah's mother had privately opined that her husband was engaged in his customary occupation of "waitin' for a bit o' luck," but she had no idea that he had abandoned himself to the underworld of Montreal.

And Norah, even now when she looked around this shabby room, had no suspicion that Midge Tapley was a derelict, a dope fiend, a denizen of Chat Noir, one of those who lurked in mysterious dens by day and emerged by night into the streets of shadow.

The gloom deepened, and although she resolutely tried to put out of her mind all the warm, delicious thoughts of the life she had left behind, they thronged her memory, and she had not the heart to banish them.

She thought of the little shop in the English village, of her kindly, patient mother behind the counter, the smell of spices and buns and groceries, the bell that tinkled when customers entered, the pretty garden back of the house, her little white room upstairs, with the gable windows looking out to the green meadows and the hedgerows and the blue sea far away.

It had all been clean and fresh and friendly, and as she looked at this dingy room with its grimy window opening on a view of roofs and chimneys and smoky sky, she suddenly yielded to homesickness, flung herself on the hard bed and sobbed wretchedly.

After a long time she sat up, wiping her eyes. The room was dark. She was lonely and frightened; she wished Midge would return.

She felt that she could not endure the narrow cell of a room a moment longer, so she got up and washed away the tear stains, powdered her nose, and then put on her hat and coat. The room was dark and close; she resolved to go outside and wait for Midge.

The lodging house seemed deserted as she went down the rickety stairs. There were rows of dismal, uncommunicative doors in the two hallways. She saw no one. She went out into the street and was surprised to find that it was not as dark as she had thought. Her room had been so gloomy that she thought night had fallen.

Two greasy-faced old harridans were jabbering fiercely at one another in French, from adjacent doorways, each with a bawling brat clinging to her skirts.

A drunken man was sitting on the pavement, his back against a telephone pole, singing a maudlin song.

A screeching child blundered against Norah and disappeared into a doorway, hotly pursued by another ragged

little savage who halted on the steps and hurled a half brick into the dark hall.

In an upper window of a house across the street a gross old man leaned out like a fat gargoyle, his arms and shoulders bare, his chest covered by a dirty undershirt. An arm emerged from a window above and a jug of slops was emptied into the street; the gargoyle vanished hastily, but popped into view again when the deluge was over; curses ascended in a throaty rumble; the arm and the jug disappeared and the upper window banged.

Norah faltered. She wanted to turn back, but when she thought of the dark little room she had just left, she forced herself to go on.

The two harridans stopped their jabbering at once, stared at her frankly, and then forgot their animosity in a muttered parley as she passed. The gargoyle in the upper window leered at her.

She would just go to the end of the block and turn back. The atmosphere was oppressive; strange odors emanated from the doorways. Chat Noir is foul. Norah's room was close and stifling, but the street was little better.

The English maiden knew nothing of the nameless things masked by these drab house fronts, and, although she shrank from the grossness and poverty of Chat Noir, she viewed the pulsing life of the street with a tremulous curiosity. She was too innocent to know fear, too ignorant of the dangers lurking in the shadows, but she knew instinctively that Chat Noir was vicious and evil.

Looking back, she could see the twinkling lights of the Main just beyond the distant corner, and hear the roar of the trolleys. She wished she had gone in that direction.

The farther she went down Chat Noir, the dirtier and more sinister it became. She reached a corner where a narrow lane cut a slanting gulf among the huddled tenements, and here she was just about to turn back when a terrifying group emerged from the alley and confronted her.

Two huge mastiffs, growling and snarling, leaping ponderously and straining at the leash, appeared first. Norah did not see the heavy whipcord that restrained them, and she gave a cry of terror as the animals plunged out of the gloom of the lane.

They bared their teeth and burst into a frenzy of hoarse barking, but when they would have leaped toward her they were brought up short. Then came their master

He was a massive, broad-shouldered man, over six feet in height, with a great shock of black hair, a rugged, swarthy face, and muscular arms, bare to the elbow. One hairy hand gripped the leash, and his feet were planted firmly on the ground, wide apart, as he braced himself to hold back the plunging dogs.

Bareheaded, barearmed, with shirt open at the throat to reveal a matted chest, he was a gigantic and terrifying figure—fit master for the ferocious brutes that were now rearing up on their haunches as he doubled the leash about his wrist and dragged them back.

He was laughing insanely, his big white teeth gleaming. It was a maniac laugh: "Yeah-ha-ha!" that seemed to rise from the depths of his great chest, and his eyes were glistening slits beneath bushy brows.

When he saw Norah his laughter trailed away into a snarl and he stood quite still, then roared a command that brought the dogs slavering and fawning to his feet, bellies to the ground, their tails lashing.

"*N'avez pas peur!*" bellowed the master of the dogs, baring his strong teeth again in a grin.

This was evidently addressed to Norah, but as she did not understand French, she did not know that he was merely telling her not to be afraid, and she was more frightened than ever.

"No French?" demanded the ogre.

She shook her head, then turned swiftly away. There was a subdued growling from the dogs, a heavy footstep, her wrist was seized in a firm grasp. The big man loomed massive at her side, and he swung her about as lightly as though she were a child; he

"Let me go, please!"

The ogre flung back his head and roared with laughter, a vigorous bellow that trailed off in throaty chuckles.

"Let you go, little one! Not yet. I have just found you."

"Please!"

Norah faltered at sight of the sinister street

still gripped the leash and the animals circled them, padding restlessly.

"Where do you come from?"

His fingers were like steel bands about her wrist, he had drawn her toward him and he was gazing down at her terrified face. His expression was at once imperious, ingratiating and cruel.

The girl was conscious of his great strength, his animal vitality, and of a fascination akin to that of the serpent. His eyes were almost black, with a cold, steady glitter in them, and as he looked down at her, the bold possessiveness of his gaze made her feel ashamed.

Although she was very frightened, Norah was surprised at the calmness of her own voice:

She tried to release herself, but although his grasp on her wrist appeared to be effortless, it was like a vise. The girl felt herself drawn closer to him.

"You will go with me," he said commandingly, a curiously vibrant tone creeping into his voice. She chanced to look into his eyes, and the glittering little lights were like magnets sapping the resistance from her. She felt suddenly weak and helpless, she wanted to look away, but the eyes held her in a spell.

By a violent effort of the will she managed to turn aside and the spell snapped; anger rose like a flame. She uttered a sob of sheer wrath, flung back her free arm and then slapped him across the face with all the strength she could muster.

She was not afraid any longer; she was angrier than she had ever been in her life; she had never believed herself capable of such murderous indignation. Again and again she slapped the swarthy face and each stinging impact restored her courage, deepened the hatred for her captor. But he only opened wide his mouth and his eyes squinted as he bellowed with laughter again.

"Ho, ho!" he choked. "You have spirit, eh? You have spirit! So much the better."

He spluttered and gurgled with laughter. The huge dogs, as though sharing his merriment, tugged at the leash, barking.

"You slap! It is good! They are caresses."

He released her wrist but flung his arm around the girl's waist and almost lifted her off her feet as he pressed her close to him, his grinning face hovering above her.

"Caress me again!" he invited. "Again! You have both hands free for more of those delicious caresses."

She kicked and struggled, but the arm circled her tightly. Norah's eyes blazed and her teeth were clenched at the indignity. She dug her sharp little finger nails into the tough skin of his cheeks, and she scratched with a fierce intensity of purpose. Livid streaks appeared and slowly crimsoned; but the ogre scarcely seemed to feel the scratches, for, although he leaned back so that she could not reach his face again, he laughed more uproariously than ever.

"You are a wild cat! You claw me, eh? Ah, but I like that!" He smacked his thick lips mockingly. "It will be fun to tame you."

She beat at his heavy chest with her fists, realizing the futility of opposing his strength. One of the dogs, snarling, lunged at her with bared teeth, but the man growled and kicked the brute so viciously that it yelped with pain and slunk back. He released his hold so that Norah was able to step back a pace, but then his fingers gripped her arm.

"Not so soon! You don't get away just yet. You will come with me, no?"

He turned back toward the alley from which he had emerged, and forced her along beside him, all the while laughing as though it were a tremendous joke. Norah was exhausted from her struggles, almost crying with terror. The mastiffs brushed against her, whining.

"I live not far!" the ogre was saying. "You shall see—"

A figure appeared at his elbow.

"M'sieu' Laboeuf," said a mild voice.

The big man swung about with a snarl. He faced a stoop-shouldered, ugly little fellow in an ill-fitting blue suit, a man with dull, tired eyes, a cynical mouth, who now stood with his hands in his pockets, an expression of weary disinterest on his homely face. Norah did not recognize him at first, and then she saw that he was none other than Burger, the cripple whom she had met in the lodging house.

"Well?" demanded the ogre.

"Excuse me for butting in," said Burger, in the same mild and placating voice, "but I thought I'd tip you off about the dame."

Laboeuf stared at him truculently.

"What about her?"

"That's Midge's gal."

Laboeuf laughed shortly, and tightened his grasp on Norah's arm.

"Listen," he rasped, and waved his free hand toward the street. "Do you see any one else buttin' in?"

They both looked back. Here and there were little groups of people gazing toward them, but although the people of Chat Noir had been watching Norah's encounter with Laboeuf, and had been taking a lively interest in the little drama, not one had moved to interfere. When they saw Laboeuf look back they turned away as if they had seen nothing.

"Do you see any one else buttin' in?" repeated Laboeuf. "You don't. They know better. In Chat Noir they know that Laboeuf is boss. *Boss*—d'you hear?" His massive fist clenched. "Burger, for that I teach you a les-

The fist smashed into Burger's face

son." The fist drew back. "If this is Midge's woman, she ain't his woman no more."

He swung viciously. The fist smashed into Burger's face; he staggered back, his hat flew off his head, he sprawled on the pavement. Laboeuf glared down at him, his nostrils dilating.

"Maybe now you will mind your own business."

Mechanically Burger rubbed the back of his hand over his face. Blood was beginning to show. Laboeuf laughed.

"I did not say she was Midge's woman," persisted Burger in the same mild voice as he got to his feet. "She is his daughter. She is one of us."

Laboeuf's laughter stopped.

Blood was streaming down Burger's face now, and one of his eyes was closing. He took a dirty handkerchief from his pocket and dabbled at his nose. He seemed to take the blow as a matter of course.

"How do you know this?" demanded Laboeuf.

Burger shrugged. "Ask her?"

There was no need. Some one came running down the street; it was Midge Tapley. He hurried up, panting, mopping his brow with his sleeve.

"What's the matter?" he asked anxiously. He looked inquiringly at Norah, then cast an obsequious glance at Laboeuf. The dogs snarled and Midge stepped back smartly. "Has there been some trouble?"

Laboeuf released Norah's wrist. She was so numb with fright by this time that she scarcely had strength to step back. Midge put an arm around her shoulders.

"Was it the dogs, Mr. Laboeuf?" asked Midge. "Was she scared of the dogs?"

Laboeuf looked at him sullenly.

"Is that your daughter?"

There was cold ferocity in his voice.

Midge nodded. "Yes. Yes. My daughter. My stepdaughter, Mr. Laboeuf. Just came over from England this day."

Laboeuf grunted. Then, without a word, he gave such a vicious yank at the leash that the dogs went blunder-

ing against each other, gave the nearest mastiff such a kick that he yelped with agony, then wheeled about and strode down the street. The huge dogs plunged on ahead of him, tugging at the whipcord.

Thus, with bare arm thrust forward, feet wide apart so that he would not be thrown off balance by any sudden lunge of the monstrous dogs, Laboeuf resumed his evening walk. Directly down the middle of the road he went, looking neither to left nor right, head high, gazing imperiously ahead, and the people of Chat Noir bowed and nodded and muttered "*B'soir*, M'sieu' Laboeuf," fawning like serfs.

"My Gawd!" exclaimed Midge. "What's been goin' on here?"

Norah huddled close to him. She wanted to fling her arms around him then, to cling to him, to press her face to his shoulder.

"That man—" She could say no more, but wept silently.

Burger, still wiping the blood from his face, with one eye now almost closed, said: "Laboeuf scared her."

Midge looked frightened. Mechanically he patted Norah's arm.

"Nothin' to be frightened of, gal," he muttered.

She looked up, tight-lipped, and brushed the tears from her eyes with an angry gesture.

"I'm not frightened. I'm mad."

"He was only foolin'."

"He's a beast."

Norah's gaze rested on Burger's battered and bleeding face. Her expression softened. "Oh, you're hurt!"

"It's all right," mumbled Burger. "My nose is bleedin' a little, but it ain't broken."

She was touched by his humility and her compassion was aroused by the sight of his blood-streaked countenance.

"But you can't leave it like that. It must pain terribly. Come with us and let me wash the blood off."

Burger shuffled his feet and would have turned away. Midge looked dubious, but Norah was insistent. She grasped Burger's sleeve and urged him to come with them. She was all concern now.

They went back down Chat Noir in silence and entered the lodging house. The landlady was prevailed upon to provide hot water, and they went to Norah's room, where she bathed Burger's face.

He submitted to her ministrations uncomfortably, protesting that he was all right, and that his injury needed no attention, but when he finally rose to go, the bloodstains had vanished and there remained only the purplish bruise about his eye.

"Thanks, miss," he muttered gratefully, nodded to Midge, and walked out of the room without a backward glance.

Midge scratched his head.

"You didn't need to go to no fuss about him."

"If it hadn't been for Mr. Burger, that brute would have taken me away with him," Norah explained.

Midge looked uneasy.

"He wouldn't have done that. He was only foolin'. Laboeuf ain't a bad sort."

"What do you know about him?"

"Well — I've known him, on and off—he's a great hand for a joke, is Laboeuf. I guess he got sore because Burger butted in."

"He struck him in the face and knocked him down. The least I could do was offer to wash off the blood for him."

"It's all right. It's all right," Midge said hastily. "I ain't kickin'. But you didn't have to do it. Burger didn't expect it."

Burger, in fact, had not expected it. Out in the hallway he was reflectively touching his face, his rough fingers bringing back more vividly than ever the memory of the smooth, gentle hands of the girl. She was so deft, so quick, so young and pretty. It had

been years since any woman had been kind to Burger.

There was a softer light in his eyes as he went slowly down the stairs and emerged again into the shadows of Chat Noir.

CHAPTER X

A TIP FROM PELHAM STARR

NORAH would have been vastly amazed could she have known of the emotions she had inspired in the legal breast of Michael Brent. Had any one asked her if she remembered encountering an odd-looking man with a black beard and a floppy hat, on the afternoon of her arrival in Chat Noir, she would have been hard put to recollect the gentleman at all, in spite of the picturesque nature of his appearance. Chat Noir itself had occupied most of her attention at the time.

However, had any one inquired of Michael Brent if he remembered seeing a bewildered girl of sweet and childish beauty, a girl of shy and delicate loveliness, in the heart of one of Montreal's most evil slums, he would have called the incident to mind with suspicious readiness.

Moreover, he would have agreed to the description with enthusiasm and supplied any number of tender adjectives by way of elaboration, to boot.

It was not only her cameo prettiness, the charm of her unsophisticated manner, the appeal of her evident misgivings that intrigued him and kept her image like a warm little flame in his heart. She had caught his interest largely because she was so obviously out of her accustomed world and so obviously aware of it; against that sinister background she was out of place.

Thence the puzzle. Why was she there? Who was her companion, that skulking little rat with the shifty eyes?

And although Brent told himself, with a sigh, that he was too old to permit himself surprise at any strange thing he saw in the streets of shadow, although he tried to dismiss the whole matter with the reflection that he would never, in all probability, see the girl again, the incident stuck to his mind like a burr.

He found himself improvising a dozen theories as to the girl's presence in Chat Noir, and each time he impatiently asked himself what possible concern it was of his, anyway.

But somehow, for no apparent logical reason, it seemed a concern of the greatest importance.

He was thinking more of the girl than of the immediate business in hand as he ascended the steps of a formidable residence in an exclusive district of Montreal next morning. It irritated him, for Michael Brent, although only thirty years old, had prided himself on being a dyed-in-the-wool degree bachelor, wholly immune to the lure of a pretty face.

"The big secret, my boy," he often told Dryborough, when that benedict confided his woes as a member of the great majority, "is not to remember 'em. When they're out of sight, keep 'em out of mind. But once you start thinking about the little blonde you met at the party last night, or when you start remembering what kind of a dress your stenographer had on to-day—that's the time to go and get drunk, or drown yourself, or something. For the skids are greased and you're beginning to slip, and you'll have to move fast or you're done for."

This had all sounded very well at the time, and with a few notable exceptions in his eighteenth year—before the virtues of the scheme had occurred to him—it had always been gratifyingly effective.

No wonder, then, that Michael Brent was irritated when he found he couldn't forget the girl of Chat Noir; it was disturbing to realize that he didn't want to forget her. His only comfort was in the reflection that he

would never see her again, but somehow that thought was not quite as consoling as it should have been.

"What's wrong with me?" he inquired testily of his inner self as he rang the bell. "I'm acting like a young calf in high school."

So, while he waited, he valiantly thrust the persistent vision into the remote recesses of his mind and sternly dwelt on the immediate problem of extracting information from Mr. Pelham Starr, whose name had been given to him by the housekeeper of a certain girl who was murdered in Mount Royal Park.

He had with difficulty contrived an appointment with Mr. Starr for that morning, but it had been managed finally through the good offices of a client whom Brent had once successfully defended in a ticklish case, and who was, incidentally, a close friend of Starr.

Only by representing Michael Brent as an implacable foe of the police, for whom Starr had no love, following several scrapes in which he had figured during the sowing of a luxuriant wild oats crop, had this friend obtained consent to the interview.

Brent was evidently expected, for a maid took his hat and coat and ushered him into the library, informing him that Mr. Starr would be down directly. He sank into the depths of a commodious leather chair and accepted a cigarette from a mahogany box that the maid left at his elbow.

Soon, with smoke drifting lazily about his head, the attorney was idly mapping a campaign to clear his client, Hinky Lewis, who was languishing in jail within the shadow of the scaffold.

As an admirer of the late Margaret Hilliard, the wealthy Mr. Starr might have information of consequence, but whether he had or hadn't, it was a foregone conclusion that he would keep a tight rein on his tongue. The Hilliard-Gregory case was monopolizing the headlines, and it was only reasonable to assume that Starr would shy at becoming involved; he would not welcome publicity of that sort.

Not that Pelham Starr was unused to objectionable publicity. He was thirty years of age, and he had gone through two years, three months and four days of university, five automobile smash-ups, one divorce, and two very exclusive scandals; he had been kicked out of two clubs, and had maintained a consistent record of at least one good jag a week since his twenty-fourth birthday, not counting a month at a sanatorium.

Publicity of such nature, however, is far removed from the publicity of front page participation in a murder mystery.

A silken swishing heralded the arrival of Pelham Starr, who came in just then, clad in pyjamas and dressing gown, growled a curt greeting and subsided into a deep armchair. He had a heavy, pulpy face with sallow skin of coarse texture, brown hair that was already thinning on top, and the eyes of a sleepy cat. His expression was habitually weary and sullen, for nothing interested him any more.

"Well?" he asked, ungraciously.

"I've been doing a little investigation work in the Hilliard case, and I thought that as you had been a friend of Miss Hilliard, you might be able to help me out," Brent said directly.

"Why come to me? I don't know anything."

"You knew Miss Hilliard."

"What's that got to do with it? I'm not the only person who knew her."

"I believe you went out with her a few times."

The maid entered the room just then with a bottle of Scotch, a siphon of soda, and glasses on a tray.

"Want a drink?" inquired Starr.

"No, thank you. It's a bit early for me."

"Then you'll excuse me."

Starr dismissed the maid and mixed himself a generous drink.

"I have to have an eye-opener," he explained. "Rotten headache." He drank, and sat back with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Did you know Gregory?"

"I met him."

"You didn't know him intimately?"

"I didn't care to. He wasn't my sort."

"Were you, in any sense of the word, rivals?"

The heavy-lidded eyes closed. "Margaret's people are good friends of ours. That was all."

"You weren't sentimentally interested?"

"Not at all."

"Did you ever discuss Gregory with her?"

Starr glanced at his interrogator over the rim of the glass. "I told her I didn't think he was in her class."

"What did she say to that?"

"None of your business," Starr retorted, and drank again.

"She told you it was none of your business?" said Brent amiably.

"No. I'm telling you it's none of *your* business."

"Pardon me if I seem inquisitive, Mr. Starr, but I'm just trying to clear up a few points that have puzzled me. Outside the matter of social position, you had nothing against Gregory?"

"He wasn't any lily."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, she thought he was one of these holy-holy chaps, but I found out a few things about Gregory."

"For instance?"

"Margaret had a few things to say because I like a little drink now and then. Well, her precious Paul was no saint."

"No?"

Presumably the headache was yielding to the beneficent effect of the eye-opener. Starr's voice had lost some of its surliness. He leaned forward.

"He certainly wasn't. He had some queer friends."

"Oh, I can hardly credit that, Mr. Starr," said Brent, shrewdly. "From what I have learned, he was an exemplary young man."

Starr rose to the bait. "That shows all you know about him. I've *seen* him."

"With whom?"

"Women."

"Other women? Oh, well—any young man may have friends, other than his *fiancée*."

"I mean," blurted Starr, "that I've seen him with streetwalkers."

"Really?"

"Yes, I've seen him with 'em. And pimps. Talking to 'em. I saw him down at the Acadia one night with three women at his table."

"You're sure of this, Mr. Starr?"

"Would I lie about it?"

"I'm not insinuating that."

"I know what I'm talking about, I tell you. He used to hang around some mighty tough parts of the city."

"Where?"

"Sanguinet and De Bullion Streets, for instance, and those back streets off St. Catherine near St. Lawrence Main."

"Not so good."

"It made me sore. Here was this willy-boy putting it across on Margaret that he was a white-haired saint, and then sneaking off by himself on jaunts into the cheap night clubs and down into the worst streets in town. I got more dope on that boy than he imagined."

"You were interested?"

"Well—I made inquiries. Frankly, it galled me when Margaret kept throwing him up to me all the time. I found out plenty. Why, do you know that fellow was having an affair with some woman in that street they call Chat Noir, for two weeks before he was killed?"

"Well, well!" exclaimed Brent, greatly astonished and inwardly excited. "You're quite sure of that, Mr. Starr?"

"Absolutely. I'm just telling you

that to show that he wasn't the innocent he made out to be."

"Miss Hilliard evidently believed in him."

"He had her fooled. But it wasn't as if she hadn't been warned against him."

"She knew?"

"I told her."

"You warned her against Gregory?"

"I told her what I had learned."

"What did she say?"

Pelham Starr shrugged. "You know how women are. She wouldn't believe me, of course."

"And it ended at that?"

"The detectives were here last night," said Starr, with seeming irrelevance. "They asked me a lot of questions, too, and they went away with damn little information. I've already told you a lot more than I told them, Mr. Brent, and if you'll promise to keep me out of this mess and not go spilling this dope to the newspapers, I'll tell you some more."

"Don't worry about the newspapers," laughed the lawyer. "This is my own little private investigation, and anything you tell me will go no further."

"Tommy Macallister told me about the jam you pulled him out of, and he said you were a decent chap, so I'll play with you as long as you don't drag me into the affair. So far as the police are concerned, they can go to the devil. They've never done me any favors, and if you're out to crimp their game, I'm with you."

"I'm trying to clear the man they've arrested for the girl's murder."

"Well—where was I? When I told Margaret what I knew about Gregory, she challenged me to tell it to his face. Frankly, I liked the girl, and when she told me I had no chance because she cared for Gregory, it made me sore. I saw him in the Acadia with these tough babies one night, so that gave me a line on him, and I had him looked up. That's how I got my information. She thought I was lying. So, to prove that I wasn't, I *did* tell it to Gregory's face, and Margaret was there."

"Did he deny it?"

"That's just it," declared Pelham Starr, triumphantly. "He did not. He admitted he had been down around Sanguinet and De Bullion, and that he had been seen talking to loose women, but he had the nerve to bluff it out. Said he had a good reason."

"What was his reason?"

"He wouldn't say. He was as white as a sheet, and nervous, and I guess he couldn't think up a good lie quick enough. He just said she would have to believe in him."

"But he didn't explain?"

"How could he? I had him cold. I have a few friends in the right places and when I want to get the goods on a man I can do it without much trouble. I had the goods on him and he knew it."

"Didn't Margaret question him?"

"Perhaps she did when I was not around. But Gregory got away with his bluff at the time. He got nasty and we had a few words."

"Oh, you quarreled?"

Starr looked up, a gleam in his eyes. He was instantly on the defensive.

"Don't get me mixed up in this," he said, distinctly. "I warn you, it won't do you any good. If you're hinting that I might have had anything to do with the murders—"

Brent laughed disarmingly.

"It never entered my head. You've taken me wrong, Mr. Starr."

Mollified, the man sank back in his chair.

"I didn't have anything to do with the murders. I want to make that clear," he muttered.

"Your little difference with Gregory was simply because he resented your interest in his affairs."

"You can put it that way. I didn't like the beggar—I don't deny it. He was as poor as a church mouse, yet he

had the presumption to hang around a girl of Margaret's position. A fortune hunter, in my opinion. Nothing more nor less. A damned fortune hunter."

"Miss Hilliard's family didn't approve of him, eh?"

"He admitted it?"

"Quite. He couldn't deny it. But he was stubborn. He said he would talk it over with Margaret when I wasn't around, but he refused to tell me anything. I could easily see what was behind that. The fellow thought

"It was very unpleasant all around," said Starr

"They didn't know. If they had, there would have been trouble. Mrs. Hilliard had better plans for Margaret. But I wasn't interested in Gregory's affairs. He could go to the devil his own way, as far as I cared, and I told him so. It was entirely on Margaret's account that I butted in. I hated to see her made a fool of."

"Naturally."

"It was very unpleasant all around," said Starr, with an aggrieved air. "I did my best to save Margaret from the fellow—and now we know what happened."

"Tragedy. Have you any theory?"

"Gregory's woman, of course."

"You're sure there was another woman?"

"Haven't I told you? Didn't I tell Margaret? Didn't Gregory himself admit visiting a woman in Chat Noir?"

he could tell her lies she might swallow but that a man would see through."

"You given me a valuable clew, Mr. Starr. Did you learn anything more about this woman?"

"No."

"Her address?"

"Nothing. He made several trips to Chat Noir, and he was seen there once with a woman, so I assume that's why he went there."

"Your warning seems to have been justified."

"If Margaret had listened to me she would probably be alive to-day. My own theory, as I said, is that Gregory's woman finished them both. Gregory wouldn't break with Margaret—not while there was a chance of marrying her for her money or being bought off by her parents. It meant money to him, either way. But he

tried to keep this other woman in tow at the same time. Probably she called for a showdown, got jealous, and when he kept up his double game she ran amuck."

"It's a much more reasonable theory than any one has advanced yet. But, of course, you have had information denied to the police."

"Are you going to tell 'em?" growled Starr.

"Not me."

"If you can use this dope without dragging me into the mess, all right. But if you double cross me and get me on the witness stand, by the Lord Harry, I'll close up like a clam, and you'll get nowhere."

Pelham Starr got up, indicating that the interview was closed. Brent did not question him further. At the door he expressed his thanks.

"You've given me a new lead, Mr. Starr."

"I hope it gets you somewhere."

Brent thought he detected a sardonic note in the man's voice.

"If only Gregory had been killed, I wouldn't have told you a thing," continued Starr, holding the door open. "Good riddance to bad rubbish, and more power to the killer's elbow, *I'd* say. I would not raise my little finger," he declared venomously. "But I *do* feel badly about Margaret. She was a damn fine girl. I hope you find out who did *that* job."

The emphasis, Brent reflected, as he went down the steps, had been unmistakable!



AERE PERENNIUS

THE arrogant masters of eternal rime
Vaunt for their song so high a permanence
Amid the dust and the decay of Time,
The face they love that else hath no defense
Against oblivion shall live ever on,
Fed on the deathless ichor of their fame,
When other faces like old flowers are gone,
Burning against the dark with quenchless flame.
But if my song shall live beyond the day
Of singing, it shall live because of thee,
Because I loved thee in so mild a way,
Because thou gavest thy love again to me;
Thy beauty shall my rimes immortal make,
And Time remember me for your dear sake.

Richard Le Gallienne

Something to Think About
By Fred A. Walker

Wasting Other People's Time

THERE is one thing that you cannot buy from the greatest merchant in the world. A minute of time.

One second is as unpurchasable as the whole of eternity.

Yet thousands of men and women go through life not only wasteful of their own precious moments but wholly regardless of the value of other people's time.

To a busy man the loss of fifteen minutes may upset the plan for a whole day's work. Delay in the keeping of an appointment may disarrange hours of scheduled efforts.

You would never think of putting your hand into the pocket of a man and taking out even the smallest coin, but you may make totally valueless for him a period of time worth more than all the money he had in all his pockets.

The great trouble with too many is that they put no value at all on time. They watch the hands of the clock go round with as little regard for the fleeing hour as for a passing wind.

For a spent dollar another may be earned to take its place. For the lost friend another may be gained. But for the hour that is gone, for the minute that is wasted, there is no supplying a substitute, no replacement. It is gone forever.

It was TIME, not guns or generals, that won and lost at Waterloo. And Napoleon was not alone among the great generals who were defeated by the clock.

"Give us time," said a great scientist, "and we can solve every problem the world offers us."

We can heap up wealth. We cannot store away one moment.

We can gain power and assemble armies. We cannot go one second back or forward from the present.

Yesterday is as if it never existed. To-morrow is as useless to-day as if it were a century away.

Frederick the Great had a maxim which he borrowed from the wisdom of Seneca: "Time is the only treasure of which it is proper to be avaricious."

Every man and woman should be stingy of every moment. And they snould recognize the value of every other person's time.

Life is composed of only two things—time and effort. One is useless without the other. Both should be as nearly one hundred per cent productive as we are able to make them.

Try as best we may, the end of life will find us with many things undone.

No man ever wholly completed the task allotted to him. There is a reasonable excuse if into our use of time no waste creeps.

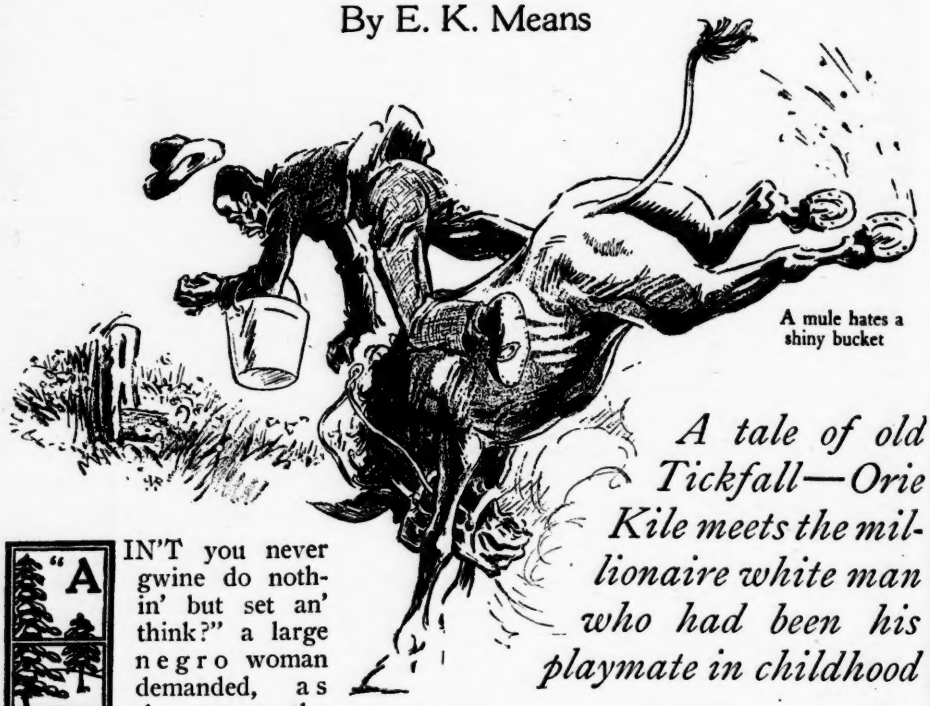
For the man who wastes his own time or steals another's, there is neither excuse nor valid reason. He has wantonly destroyed that which no man can restore or replace.

Put a value on every minute. Be as anxious and as certain to get that value as you are to gain the worth of your dimes and your dollars.

Remember that once a minute has passed by it has gone FOREVER.

His Secret Sorrow

By E. K. Means



A mule hates a shiny bucket

A tale of old Tickfall—Orie Kile meets the millionaire white man who had been his playmate in childhood

"AIN'T you never gwine do nothin' but set an' think?" a large negro woman demanded, as she came to the door of a cabin and glared with baleful eyes at a negro man who sat nursing his wool hat upon his knee and fumbling the loose and flapping ears of a hound.

"Yes'm, I aims to move direckly," Orie Kile replied, looking at his sister with timid eyes. "I jes' ain't quite made up my mind to git to gwine."

"Us is got two dozen eggs," Doonie Kile announced. "We needs a couple of pounds of lard. You put dem eggs in a bucket an' take 'em to town to a store an' swap 'em for a bucket of lard grease."

"Yes'm," Orie replied, with a quick change in his voice from a complaining whine to a compliant eagerness. "Glad to git a chance to go to town. Kin I ride de mule?"

"Suttinly you kin ride de mule," Doonie said. "Ef I let you walk, you wouldn't git back dis week!"

Orie arose and entered the cabin. He placed the eggs loose in a shiny tin bucket and tied the bucket top over them with a piece of twine. Setting the pail on a stump, he went to the stable after his mule. He mounted the mule without a saddle, and in going out of the yard, as he passed the stump, he reached out his hand and picked up his freight.

Now every negro will tell you that "a mule jes' nachelly hybomernates a shiny bucket." Orie knew this as well

as any other colored man, but, as usual, his mind was on his secret sorrow, and he forgot to wrap something around the bucket. For a while the flapping, loose blinders on the bridle prevented the mule from seeing what Orie carried on his arm; but finally, when the animal got a look, his action was electrical in its promptness and intensity.

The mule placed his head between his front knees, the heels of his hind feet sought the stars, and he gave his body a twist like a fish turning over to die with his belly to the sun. By this process he deposited Orie in a sitting posture in the deep sand of the road, leaving him there to enjoy himself and look at the scenery, with the bucket of eggs still on his arm. Then the mule stood by, breathing deeply, his chest heaving like that of a motion picture actor registering love, hate, joy, sorrow, and all the other emotions.

Orie investigated and found that six of the two dozen eggs were broken. He took off his coat, and tried to conceal the bucket by wrapping it in the ragged garment; but the mule would not let him mount again, and in the scramble, when he dropped the bucket, eight more eggs were scrambled.

Orie opened the receptacle and looked again, and saw ten whole eggs floating around in what he called "a mess of goo." He set his bucket on the fence, put on his coat, placed the good eggs in his pocket, and once more attempted to mount the mule. He came very near succeeding, but six more eggs were smashed.

Then Orie got mad. He snatched the bucket from the top of the fence and hit the animal over the head with it. When the mule broke away and trotted off, Orie followed, and threw the remaining four good eggs at the rebellious beast. He was a good marksman, and all four eggs splashed their sticky contents over the mule's anatomy.

When Orie returned to where the bucket lay in the road, he found it bent and dented beyond use, so he gave it a kick to indicate his disgust and walked on toward Tickfall. When he reached the steep hill that marked the edge of the village, he saw a bench under a tree. Orie never walked if he could ride, never stood if he could sit; and he sank down upon the bench with a grateful sigh.

He turned his pockets wrong side out, scraped the scrambled eggs out of them, and placed his coat in the sun to dry. Suddenly he thought of something, and stuck his hand in the inside pocket of his coat to bring it forth. It was a copy of the *Whoop*, the village newspaper, and on the front page was an engraving of a man's face—such a face as you may see depicted in the success magazines under the title "Masters of Finance."

Orie could not read, but he recognized the picture.

"Dat's little Max, all right," he said aloud to himself. "Dat white boy is growed consid'able, but I knowed him direckly I seed his face in de paper wropped aroun' a bottle of milk. I bet he's done somepin, too, to git his picture wrote up in de paper like dis!"

Then Orie glanced up, leaped over the back of the bench on which he had sat, and dropped flat on the ground among some buckberry bushes. He lay perfectly still and carefully concealed until an irate woman riding a mule passed out of sight. The mule still bore the signs of having been assaulted with several juicy eggs. Sister Doonie was looking for her brother, breathing out threatenings and slaughter.

Orie went on into the little town, but he traveled along unfrequented paths.

II

THE Big Four were sitting idly upon the front steps of the Shoofly Church. They were bored by the heat, by the general dullness of the town of Tickfall, and by their own laziness, and they were casting about for somebody's

business in which they could meddle. They never had any affairs of their own which seemed to require the least attention.

"De trouble wid us is dat we ain't no good to ourselfs nor nobody else," Vinegar Atts remarked philosophically. "We is wuthless, an' we cucumber de yearth."

"You is de wusst cucumber in de garden patch," Pap Curtain snarled; "so I reckin you is competent to judge about de rest of us."

"I'm got a real mission in life," Vinegar protested. "I'm a preacher of de Gawspill, an' a real good one, too—a darn good one. I admits dat fack myself. You gimme a quart of whisky an' two sour lemons, an' I kin preach louder dan any nigger in de State of Loozanny!"

"You kin preach loud, all right," Pap assured him; "but sometimes you takes up a whole hour widout tellin' anybody whut you's preachin about, an' nobody cain't find out. It's like a puzzle whut you buy in a sto'—you cain't wuck it out, an' ef you do you ain't got nothin'."

"Well, you ain't nothin' in life but a grub worm," Vinegar declared. "You digs wells an' graves, an' lives halfway under de ground most of de time. I don't think much of grub worms!"

"Pap ain't no worm," Skeeter amended. "He's a germ."

"You niggers stop blimblammin' an' swappin' slams dat way," Figger counseled. "Fust news you knows, you'll git in a fracas."

"Who told you to come buttin' in here like a bumpin' bug?" Vinegar snapped.

"All right, revun," Figger said, as he rose to his feet and dusted the seat of his trousers with a sliding motion of his hands. "I'll go down town an' buy you two sour lemons, so you kin keep it up all day."

He paused and stared at something which he saw near a large oak tree some distance down the road. He stood with the steady attention of a horse hitched to a post; but the other men were miserable with the heat, and showed no sign of interest in what their friend beheld.

"Ef you niggers want to scandalize somebody, you mought take dat Orie Kile fer a subjeck," Figger suggested. "He's over dar right now, settin' under dat tree."

"I cain't make dat nigger out," Vinegar remarked. "He looks all de time like he's bothered in his mind."

"He ain't got no mind," Skeeter snapped.

"He ain't got nothin' but time," Vinegar sighed; "an' he wastes dat like he belonged to de Big Four of Tickfall. He hadn't oughter be dat way. His maw an' paw wus tol'able respeckable, an' he's got a couple sisters who wucks as cooks aroun' town; but dis feller's a noosunce an' a disgrace to our village."

"He's always broke, too," Skeeter said. "He use to come reg'lar an' try to borry some money from me. I didn't loant it to him ontil I got tired bein' pestered wid him, an' den I lent him de loant of five dollars. Since dat coon made dat borry, he ain't never hung aroun' me since; but I ain't never got my money back, neither. Ef we meet up, I jes' ax him polite when he's gwine pay me back, an' he jes' fades away."

"I always figgered dat he had some secret sorrer," Figger Bush remarked. He had become so much interested in the discussion of Orie Kile's shortcomings that he sank back upon the steps and forgot his determination to go to town. "Mebbe some dreadful grief is a gnawin' at his vitals."

"I hope it chaws a hole plumb through him an' kills him!" Skeeter declared.

"I think us niggers ought to go over dar an' sermonize him," Vinegar said. "Mebbe ef us fo' leadin' citizens of de town warns him of de error of his way,

he mought refawm. Us is horrid examples of whut loafin' an' laziness is, an' Orie Kile hadn't oughter try to be like us."

"'Twon't do no good to play no chin music to him," Pap Curtain said. "He lives wid dem two gal sisters of his, an' dey jaw at him all de time. Whut we needs to do is to git a big pistol gun an' stick de bizness end of it up ag'in' his stomick, whar de secret sorrer gnaws at his vitals, an' tell him whar he'll spend eternity ef he don't change his ways."

"Mebbe we's doin' him wrong by not findin' out fust whut ails him," Vinegar said. "It mought be some great misforchine wrecked his life. I move we all go an' see." He paused and stared at the oak tree where Orie had been seen last. "Dar now!" he exclaimed. "Dat nigger is done up an' gone away from dar. We got to hunt him!"

"Dis am awful hot weather fer a coon hunt," Pap complained.

III

THE four loafers solemnly marched off to inquire into a matter which was distinctly none of their business. They sauntered idly along, passing from one crooked street to another through the negro section of the village. They sought Orie Kile under every shady tree, looked for him in every dark alley, visited various negro hang-outs, and finally found him sitting on a curbstone, with his feet in the gutter, his back pressed against a telephone pole for support, and his derby hat pulled down over his eyes, the brim resting upon the bridge of his flat nose.

The quartet came to parade rest beside the somnolent creature, and waited until he showed enough curiosity about their presence to uncover his face. Orie, on his part, was hoping that they would think he was asleep, and would pass on without disturbing him. Did he not owe one of them money? Had not all four probably come to collect the five dollars that he owed Skeeter?

At last, however, the hat fell off his nose and down upon his lap, and he looked at the four men inquiringly. They merely stood there and stared back. Then Orie waved a feeble hand toward them and said:

"Git away! Don't bodder me!"

"Whut ails you, Orie?" Vinegar asked. "Sick?"

"Naw—broke an' hongry," Orie replied. "Tryin' to go to sleep an' fergit it."

"Why don't you wuck?" Vinegar asked. "I ain't seed you tryin' to do nothin' fer about two weeks."

"I ain't wuckin'," Orie informed them. "I cain't find my dice."

"I see you in a crap game last night," Figger Bush said.

"Yep, I borrered some tools an' wucked a little bit, but it wus a bad mistake," Orie mourned.

"How much did you lose?" Skeeter demanded.

"Dey got it all," Orie replied. "Dey deprive me of eve'ything excusin' my honor an' my pride. Dey couldn't git dem, because I didn't hab none wid me."

"How much money?" Skeeter repeated.

"Six bits."

"Good Lawd!" Skeeter snapped. "I figgered dat you done lost a house an' farm an' fo' race hosses. Dat wus cheap fun!"

"It wus de only kind of fun I could affode," Orie sighed. "I had to borry de bones to git dat, an' de money to play wid. Somepin is shore happened to my dice. I cain't find 'em nowhar."

"An' now whut?" Vinegar asked.

"I's bust," Orie said. "No money, no job, no friends to borry from."

"Does you ever pay back whut you borrows?" Skeeter asked.

"I carried dem borrered bones back," Orie told him. "Of co'se, de money didn't go back. I told de feller whut loant it to me dat I would pay it

back if I win; but I didn't win, an' so dat settles dat. Dem bones warn't no good, so I tuck 'em back."

"Well," Vinegar said impatiently, "whut is you gwine to do fer de rest of yo' life? Jes' set here ag'in' de telerphome pole an' starve?"

"You done said it," Orie grinned.

Then Vinegar drew himself up in his best pulpit form and prepared to deliver a moral lecture. The others, from many years of practice, assumed comfortable positions to listen.

The preacher's voice dropped an octave and vastly increased in volume.

"Now, Orie," he began, "dar is a heap of no 'count niggers in dis town, of which you is one of de wusst. You is a disgrace to us nigger race. You oughter be well spoke of, like yo' sisters is, but you ain't. You oughter wuck, like yo' sisters does, but you don't. You never has no vis'ble means of suppote. Ef we had a real policeman in dis town, he would hab you up in jail fer fragrancy. Now we Big Fo' is a cormittee to wait on you. We craves to know, whut are you gwine to do?"

"I aims to disappear from dis place," Orie said. "Somebody gimme a cigarette!"

"Is you makin' yo'self absent fer good, or does you crave to come back when you git yo'self financial agin?" Vinegar persisted.

"I'm gwine fer good," Orie assured him. "Life ain't wuth livin' in Tickfall no mo', an' my secret sorrer is eatin' my heart away."

"Yo' which?" Vinegar howled.

"My sorrer," Orie repeated. "When I wus a little pickaninny, I played wid a little white boy named Max Sandlin. One day dat white boy told me he wus gwine away from Tickfall. He wus gwine down to N'Awleens, an' wus gwine to make a millyum dollars; an' he promise me dat when he got his millyum, he wus gwine to gimme enough to live on all my life widout wuckin'."

"How come he thought so much of you dat he promise all dat?" Vinegar wanted to know.

"Well, suh, it all goes back to a little scrape me an' him got into," Orie explained. "Max needed two dollars, because a circus show wus comin' to town; so me an' him kotched a goose, an' we toted it to a ol' lady who wus sick abed, an' we sold it to her fer one dollar. When she gib us de dollar, she told us she wus sick abed an' couldn't put it in de coop, an' axed us to do dat fer her. We done it, an' den we told her dat we had another goose fer sale, an' did she crave to buy it? She said she did; so we went out de front way widout any goose, an' we climbed over de back fence an' stole dat goose out'n de coop. Den we fotch it aroun' to her agin an' sold it to her de secont time fer one mo' dollar. We needed two dollars so we could bofe go to de show, and hab some spendin' money besides. We could hab kep' dat up all day an' made a heap of money, but we didn't know any mo' lady folks whut wus sick abed."

"Dat wus plumb dishonest," Vinegar declared.

"We found dat out later," admitted Orie. "One day, when we done fergot dem gooses off'n our mind, she axed us to come into de house an' he'p her move some furnicher. We warn't but seven year ol', an' we couldn't be much he'p; but we never thought about dat, because we wanted de two bits whut she promised us. When she got us in de house, she locked us up in a room, tuck all our clothes off'n us, an' made us put on two of her ol' nightgowns. Dey wus white an' raggedy, and dey made us look like de debbil. Den she gib us de two bits money dat she promise us, an' pushed us out'n de house in de middle of de day wid a bright sun shinin', an' told us to go home!"

"Dar now!" Vinegar Atts bawled. "You shore got yo' come-uppance dat time!"

"Whut come to pass atter dat?" Skeeter Butts asked.

"I tuck Max out an' hid him in de coop whar we put de goose," Orie continued. "Den I wropped my nightgown aroun' me, kinder like a bathin' suit, an' went home acrost de back fences an' acrost de back lots. I had a little shirt an' a pair of pants whut Max had gimme fer Sunday—some of his ol' clothes, an' I got dat an' fotch it to dat little white boy, an' he wore my clothes home. He said he would never fergit me as long as he lived because of whut I done fer him."

"Whut a little seven-year-ol' white boy say don't amount to nothin'," Pap Curtain snarled.

"It do! It do!" Orie exclaimed with sincere loyalty. "Whut Max Sandlin said to me stands good fer-ever. I knows dat white boy!"

"I rickoleck Mr. Max Sandlin," Skeeter said. "I seen somepin in de town paper about dat white man recent. He either went from here or he wus comin' back here, I don't remember which."

"He went away from here," Orie informed them. "Dat white boy went away about twenty year ago. Longer dan dat, because he wus gone twenty year befo' I seen him again. He went into de cotton future bizness an' gambled, an' he had real good luck."

"He's got his millyum all right," Vinegar declared. "Two three of 'em, de paper said."

"Yes, suh," Orie agreed. "About fo' year ago I wus in N'Awleens, an' I met dat white man face to face, an' stopped an' spoke wid him. He knowed me right off an' called me by my name; but I had not saw him fer so long a time dat I done fergot his promise to me complete, an' I talked to him an' went away from him, an' fergot to ax him fer my share of dat money. Dat is my secret sorrer."

"My Lawd!" Skeeter wailed. "When you thunk of it, how come you didn't go back?"

"I done so," Orie told them. "About a year later I remembered, an' I hopped a ride on de train an' went back. I found out dat white boy had went to New Yawk to live, an' I know I'll never see him agin. Dat bad luck done bust my heart. Dat is my secret sorrer."

The four men stared at him in pity. Then they stared at one another. Vinegar made a gesture which indicated that they should take their departure from that scene of sorrow; and the feet of the four shuffled along heavily in the dust.

"Well, so long, Orie," Vinegar said. "We'll see you agin, mebbe, befo' you disappears complete."

IV

THE sapient quartet wandered back to the Henscratch and sat down.

"Whut dat Orie needs to cure his secret sorrer is to marry an' settle down in de country, about nine miles from nowhar, an' become one of dese here gent'man farmers," Skeeter began.

"It would be de makin' of him," Vinegar agreed. "When a man's got a family to wuck fer, he ain't got no time to lament his bad luck; an' ef he's got to add de wuck of a farm to de wuck fer his family, Lawdy!"

"Mebbe some man whut owns one of dese here abandoned farms will he'p him git a start," Figger Bush said.

"Naw!" Pap Curtain protested. "Dat coon is de most deespised nigger in dis town. He's too promisin'. He'll promise anybody to come to wuck at any sort of job to-morrer mawnin' early. He says it saves talk jes' to promise 'em an' let 'em go away happy. Of co'se, Orie never comes to wuck, an' never studied about comin' to wuck, an' de white folks remembers dat an' holds a grudge ag'in' him. Ef he promised to wuck a abandoned farm, he would shore keep it abandoned."

"But ef he choosed a good wife an' put hisself whar he had some 'sponsi-

bility, mebbe dat would be diffunt," Figger said.

"Whar you gwine to find a gal who'll marry dat wuthless nigger fer hisself alone?" Skeeter Butts snapped.

"Dem sweet dears is fool enough to fall in love wid anybody," Pap Curtain asserted. "Look at me! I'm jes' as near nothin' as Gawd ever made, an' yit I wus besot by de lady folks eve'y time my wife died, an' I been married five times—"

"Shore!" Figger hastily interrupted. "An' dar is plenty widder womans in de worl' whut is always awful easy to please."

"Anyhow, a man whut is totin' a inward grief like dat oughter hab some kind of relief," Vinegar suggested. "Now ef us niggers knowed a real nice gal dat we could git him to start wid, she mought do all de rest. Dat would make Orie happy, an' us could claim credick fer a large amount of great good."

"De story of dat nigger's life sounds awful sad to me," Pap Curtain sighed. "Think of a feller walkin' aroun' N'Awleens an' pickin' up a white playmate whut had promised him to make him rich ef he ever got rich hisself, an' den fergittin' to ax him fer his'n!"

"Jes' when he needed it most, too," Vinegar lamented. "A nigger needs it wusst when he kin git it. I ain't supprised he's got a busted heart. I would hab died of grief by now. In fack, ef a white feller would promise to gib me a millyum dollars when he made it, I would drap down dead right away."

"I moves we take dat nigger out to de hawg camp on a little vacation," Skeeter Butts suggested. "Ol' Isaiah Gaitskill's got one of his gal nieces out dar, an' mebbe we could make a match betwix' 'em."

"Suttinly," Pap agreed. "Orie could make friends wid de hawgs an' de gal, an' stay out dar fer a year an' a day ef he wants to."

So that afternoon the four men started with Orie to the hog camp in the Little Moccasin woods. They were walking slowly along, singing snatches of negro songs and commenting upon everything they passed, when they saw a big cloud of dust approaching, and stepped out of the road to permit a big limousine to whizz by. The car was driven by a liveried chauffeur, and as it passed the five men got a glimpse of a white man's face through the window.

Suddenly Orie sat down heavily upon the ground and began to fan himself feebly with his hat, as if completely overcome by some experience or emotion.

"My Gawd, brudders!" he exclaimed. "Did you niggers see who wus in dat car?"

"Suttinly! It wus a white man," Vinegar informed him. "He wus settin' up in dat big glass hearse, an' he looked like he wus sorry he wus bawn to die."

"He is de one!" Orie howled. "Dat white man is little Max Sandlin, whut I knowed years ago. He promise me to come back to de town an' make me rich!"

"He don't look like de little boy I knowed years ago," Skeeter said. "He looks more like de kind of man whut would fight a rattlesnake an' bite its tail off."

"Dat's him, but he's growed up an' changed," Orie declared.

"He's done made some great change," Pap commented. "Dat white man ain't gwine gib you nothin'. Ef you axed him, dat man would pull off yo' own hind leg an' beat you to death wid it!"

"I know dat's him," Orie said. "I wonder ef he's come back to town to hunt me up an' make me rich, like he promised!"

"It don't sound reasomble to me," Vinegar declared. "Of co'se, nobody ever knows whut a white man's gwine to do. Not even de good Lawd knows dat. Dat white man looks like ef he

ever made a dime, he's got it yit. I bet no nigger cain't git it away from him widout compelment. Whut you want to do? Is you gwine out wid us to de hawg camp, or does you crave to foller de hearse?"

"I'm gwine back to town," Orie said. "Ef any feller's huntin' aroun' fer me to gimme money, I don't aim to be hard to find!"

"Does you crave to go it alone, or does you want to take us wid you?" Vinegar asked. "De Big Fo' always moves as a solid body."

"Come wid me," Orie pleaded. "I'm skeart to go it alone. My mind an' mem'ry slipped off once jes' when I needed it most, an' I want somebody to stand by me."

V

WHEN the men returned to Tickfall, they found the big limousine parked on the drive of the Lanthorn home.

"Le's go right in an' ax fer Max," Orie said eagerly, as they stopped in the middle of the road and stared at the big house standing back among the live oaks.

"You ain't talkin' to me, nigger," Pap Curtain snarled. "I don't look like de kind of coon dat jes' walks right in an' axes fer Max!"

"I bet dat white man is one of dese here stiffish, distancified fellers whut likes his own comp'ny best," Skeeter remarked. "I bet he's like dem men behin' de cage in a bank."

"Yep, he's skeart to 'sociate wid niggers. He's afraid some of de black mought rub off on him," Figger surmised.

"All right!" Orie said desperately. "Of co'se, I expecks to git kilt or somepin, but I'm gwine to bust through an' hab a talk wid Max, even ef I's got to set dat house on fire to git him to come out!"

"I moves we go aroun' behin' de house an' start a fight," Pap Curtain proposed. "Mebbe he'll come out to see which nigger whups."

The five men skirted the house through the woods. The longer they looked at the mansion, the less possible it seemed to get any sort of message to the man they desired to see.

"Hol' on, Orie!" Vinegar said, getting weak in the knees, and sitting down heavily upon a log. "To me, dat white man looks like a cold, hard case. Dem's my feelin's todes him, an' I'm such a simple cuss I'm apt to show my feelin's. I move we calls dis move off!"

Orie shook his head in stubborn determination, and announced that he was going to see Mr. Max if he died for it.

"All right!" Vinegar said. "I kin 'most always tell when I'm about to git into trouble. Whut's de plan?"

"I been thinkin' about dat," Skeeter said. "Now I dope it out dis way—de Lanthorn chauffeur lives in a house on dis place, but it's down de hill by de creek. Dey's got a telephome in de chauffeur's cabin, so de Lanthorn gals kin call him up whenever dey desires to use de car."

"I sees de point," Pap Curtain said. "We telephomes to Max dat we wants to see him on important private bizness, an' will meet him at de garage. Is dat it?"

"Yep," agreed Skeeter; "an' as Vinegar Atts is got de most important soundin' voice in de crowd, he must do de telephome act."

"I'm willin'," Vinegar said reluctantly. "I'll telephome, an' den I'll hide behin' a stump an' let you fellers do de rest, when he comes out to see whut it's all about."

And that is what they did.

Now very few things that appertained to Max Sandlin's affairs ever escaped his alert eyes. The man who guards his millions practices eternal vigilance. For half an hour Mr. Sandlin had been aware of a group of negroes lingering about the premises, and he had promptly assured himself of their identity. Now that they had mus-

tered the courage to call for him, he suppressed the twinkle in his eyes and the little wintry smile upon his lips, and went out to them.

Tremblingly the five men watched him move toward the garage. He was a large, athletic man, with dark skin, black eyes, and black hair, except for a streak of early gray which lay across the top of his head and gave him a look of distinction. He had been pointed out to many a sight-seer in the Cotton Exchange by this white plume across his dark head. He moved across the ground with a firm step, knew exactly where he was going, and marched toward his destination with the same determination that he had shown when he was advancing upon the acquisition of his first million dollars. There was nothing friendly about his straight, tight-lipped mouth, and his poker face revealed not the least surprise when he turned the corner of the garage and found the five colored men standing there.

"Well?" he said, staring at the five men. "What is it?"

For a moment no one answered. Then Skeeter Butts said humbly:

"Beg yo' parding, suh, but dar is a nigger among us who say dat he knowed you once an' craves to see you agin. I think he's crazy, myself."

"I think so, too," Mr. Sandlin said, narrowing his eyes and looking at the men as if he was sighting down a gun barrel.

"Orie is dat nigger's name—Orie Kile," Vinegar volunteered.

To the eyes of most observers there would not have been a visible sign that Mr. Sandlin had ever heard that name; but the negro's eye is photographic, the most observant optic in this seeing world. The five colored men caught a slight movement in one corner of the millionaire's mouth, an almost imperceptible lifting of his shoulder, and a closing of the fingers of his left hand. Then Mr. Sandlin said:

"Well, what of it?"

"Boss, he specifies dat he craves to hab a talk wid you, about ol' times and sich like," Vinegar murmured. "Of co'se, ef you don't know him, or don't remember nothin' about him, or don't desire to see him agin, all you got to do—"

"Yes, I understand," Mr. Sandlin broke in. "You colored people will chase him off the premises."

"Suttinly," Vinegar agreed heartily. "Us will run him off right now, if you say so."

Mr. Sandlin stood there motionless for a long time. He gave them no sign of what was in his mind. They became more and more uneasy and embarrassed. Then he uttered his decision in a voice which cracked like a pistol and made every negro jump.

"Bring him up! Where is he? Which one of you?"

Skeeter placed his hand upon Orie's back and pushed him forward. Mr. Sandlin gazed at him much as he would look at a cold boiled potato served as the "*à la mode*" on top of his apple pie; and Orie felt as if he was *à la* mud.

"Escuse us," Vinegar said in a panicky tone. "Mebbe us niggers better walk over in de woods ontil you finish yo' talk."

"Not at all necessary," Mr. Sandlin replied in a crisp, businesslike tone which had the force of a royal command. "It will only take a moment for this colored man to state very briefly his exact purpose in coming here to see me."

Orie bowed awkwardly.

"I come to see de only little white boy I ever knowed whut liked me an' played wid me when I wus a pickaninny an' he wus a little feller. I's glad to see dat while I's jes' growed up, he's growed great."

"The little white boy ceased to exist—disappeared—a good many years ago," Mr. Sandlin said coldly. "You cannot see him again, because he is not."

"But I ain't fergot him off'n my mind, Mr. Max," Orie continued earnestly. "Yes, suh, I been lovin' dat little white boy all my days. He wus de only good friend I ever had!"

Mr. Sandlin gave a chuckle of a laugh which sounded like a little hammer tapping the steel money vault of a bank. There the five colored men stood, and each man's head was bowed and his chin was in his collar. For the negro is the most sensitive creature on earth, and Mr. Sandlin was showing not the slightest sign of friendliness or sympathy.

"Boss," Orie said in a voice which was hopeless with disappointment, "I jes' stopped by to git a few mo' words from you. We talked about a heap of things when we wus little, an' I hoped to hear yo' voice agin. Dey tells me you is great an' rich an' fine, an' I wanted a few advices from de man whut liked me an' played wid me one time. I felt like one kind word would be enough, so I could hear yo' voice agin."

"If that is really all," replied Mr. Sandlin coldly, "I would advise you to express a desire for something else besides kind words. All my kind words froze up a long time ago."

"Yes, suh, thankee, suh," Orie said with almost a sob in his voice. Then he turned to the Big Four and added: "Come on, brudders! Us better be gwine on."

Sandlin stood watching them with a hard, cynical smile. The men wheeled, walked away, and turned the corner of the garage. Then behind them there sounded a laugh so jolly, so full of humor and the joy of life, that they turned back and peeped around the corner of the building, to see who else had come up.

To their utmost surprise, Max Sandlin stood before them completely transformed—the sort of fun-loving Southerner with whom they had been on cordial terms all their lives. His laugh was infectious. They laughed, too. In a moment they realized that Mr. Max had been "prankin' wid 'em."

"You niggers come over here in the woods with me and sit down," Max said. "I know the names of all of you, and I'm so glad to see you that I cannot tell you how I feel! We'll have a smoke together and talk it over."

They sat down in the woods, lighted the cigars which Mr. Sandlin furnished, and were about to begin, when there was an interruption.

A fat negro woman stopped on the side of the road. She was riding a mule whose back and sides looked as if he had rolled over on the nest of a brooding hen, and had destroyed old biddy's hope of posterity by smashing all the eggs upon his back and carrying away the unhatched family in the hair of his hide. She belled her hands around her mouth and bawled:

"Come here, Orie, you ol' debbil! I shore am got a few hot words to say to you!"

"Ole sis is done kotch up wid me," Orie exclaimed in despair. "From now on my days is few an' full of misery!"

"Go out there and tell her to take that danged mule down to the auto washing station an' turn the hose on him!" Max Sandlin said sharply. "Tell her to wash every bit of that dried egg juice off his hide. That mule looks like an omelet!"

"Yes, suh," Orie answered.

"Tell her that from this time on I will take care of you, just as I promised twenty-five years ago," Mr. Sandlin continued.

"Bless Gawd!" Vinegar bawled. "Orie's secret sorrer is done bust on him!"

Orie rose and walked to the side of the road, stepping high, like a turkey walking through mud. Grandly he waved a hand in dismissal to the woman on the mule.

"Move along, sister!" he commanded. "From dis time forth, I'se Mr. Max Sandlin's pussonal nigger!"

Father and Son

He kept his eyes fixed on the great stage curtain; he dared not look at Judy again

Judy Meredith, faced by a strange problem, makes an unexpected decision by which she solves it

By Ruby M. Ayres

SHE died—very suddenly—on the day when they bought the boy's first school satchel. One moment she was apparently quite well, laughing and joking and talking of what they would make of Ronnie when he grew up; the next, all that was left of her lay still and white on the sofa, looking like a little girl in her blue frock with its short sleeves and frilly skirt. Outside in the garden the stir of summer life went on—the droning of the bees, and the song of the birds; while above everything rose the pervasive scent of jasmine, a haunting, unforgetable perfume.

That was twenty years ago, and now for the first time some one else had come into Martin Shirley's life and pushed his wife's bright ghost a little into the background.

Twenty years is a long time. It seemed a lifetime to the man who stood looking at the faded portrait of his wife on the mantelshelf, while the mirror behind it almost cruelly reflected the gray in his hair and the lines in his face.

Shirley was fifty now. Ronnie, whose first school satchel they had bought on that memorable summer day, was just twenty-five, a fine, upstanding young fellow with his father's stalwart build and his mother's blue eyes. The two had been all in all to each other. More like brothers than father and son, they had shared their pleasures and their sorrows. Their tastes had been alike, and they had been all sufficient to each other until—until when?

Martin Shirley found it difficult to name a moment when the first subtle change had come about, but an honest searching of his sore heart told him that it was when he first met the gray

serenity of Judy Meredith's eyes. Ronnie was in love with Judy, and had said so. Ronnie's father was also in love with Judy, but had not said so. She was staying at a house opposite, with an ailing and elderly aunt, and the friendship had come about quite naturally, till now she walked in and out of their lives as if she really belonged to them, and had unconsciously wrenched them out of their quiet rut to whirl along new and less happy tracks.

Judy was Ronnie's age—just half of Martin Shirley's.

"I'm a fool, my dear, an old fool!" Martin told his wife's portrait wistfully, and wondered if she knew, and if his disloyalty hurt her in the heaven where he was sure she must be at rest.

There was a third man in love with Judy—a cousin in the house where she was staying, a big, clumsy man, slow of speech, with faithful brown eyes like a dog's, that spoke all the things to which his tongue could give no utterance. After his name he wore a string of letters which learned men honored, and which left Judy humbly confused and amazed.

"She ought never to have come into our lives," Martin went on, talking to his wife's portrait. "We were quite happy before she came, and now—shall we ever be happy again, I wonder?"

And yet Ronnie seemed happy enough. There was no shadow in his eyes when he apologized for leaving his father alone while he took Judy out for drives or walks, or played tennis with her, or let her beat him at golf.

"Won't he come with us?" Judy asked sometimes, with a backward glance at Martin's solitary figure. "Won't he be lonely?"

"Not he!" Ronnie answered cheerily. "He's got tons to do. We've never known a dull moment."

That was true, when the two of them did everything together; but when Martin was left alone—

This was one of the "left alone" mornings. He had just waved goodby to his son and Judy as they drove off in Ronnie's racing car, and now the long, lonely day lay before him.

"I'm a middle-aged man, and the boy's young," he told himself, and tried to be content; but he could settle to nothing.

Having wandered all over the house and garden, which had never seemed dull or lonely until to-day, he came back to his wife's portrait for comfort. How different everything would have been if she had lived! Twenty years was a long time, and perhaps he might be forgiven for wanting to kiss Judy's smiling lips, or to feel her head resting against his shoulder; but of course she belonged to Ronnie, for youth turns to youth. Soon he would either be left lonely or have to receive her into his life as a daughter.

A daughter! Surely the gods laughed, for his heart was young even if his hair was gray, and he knew himself to be more capable of making Judy happy than Ronnie, who even now was racing with her through the sunshine, care-free and confident.

Judy was looking straight ahead of her, a little pucker between her brows.

"I think he *must* be lonely, no matter what he says," she broke out suddenly. "He's so used to having you with him."

Ronnie looked down at her in surprise.

"Who? The guv'nor? Oh, he's all right. I never knew a chap with so many interests—the garden, reading—the dogs — golf, tennis — he plays a wonderful game, too—beat me the other day, in spite of his age."

"But he's not so very old, is he?"

"About fifty, I think."

"And your mother died how long ago?"

"I was five years old." Ronnie thought it was sweet of Judy to be so much interested in his people, and he

went on eagerly: "I can just remember her. She had a lot of fair hair, and she used to laugh a great deal. I remember a blue dress she used to wear." He touched a fold of Judy's frock. "It was something like this color."

"Did your father love her very much?"

"I'm sure he did. Anyway, he's never looked at a woman since."

"Hasn't he?" said Judy, and there was a little wistful note in her voice.

"You see, he's always had me," Ronnie explained with unconscious egotism. "We've always done everything together. He's been a brick! Somehow we've never seemed like father and son, but just brothers."

"Yes—you both have the same tastes, you see."

"We have. We're both awfully keen on sport, and we both love music." Again he glanced down at her, to ask interestedly: "Do you love the opera?"

"I've not been very much, but I think I should."

"I must take you. 'Butterfly' is on at Covent Garden to-morrow night. Do you like that?"

"I'm not sure that I really know it."

"Oh, then, we must go! I'll ring up for two stalls when we get back."

"Won't Mr. Shirley come?"

"Well—do you want him to come?"

"He won't like me if I take you away from him too often."

"He won't mind," Ronnie said, and laughed. "He's been young himself."

"I think he's young now. At least, he seems young to me—much younger than John."

"You mean your cousin?" Ronnie made a little grimace. "Well, I suppose studying hard and getting half the alphabet after your name makes you look a bit ancient. John seems like Methuselah to me."

"He's very kind—the kindest man I know, I think."

A gleam of jealousy flashed through Ronnie's blue eyes.

"Does he still want to marry you?"

"Oh, yes!"

Ronnie stopped the car so violently that Judy was thrown forward a little.

"But you won't!" he urged passionately. "He'd make you miserable. He can't love you as much as I do. You know how much I love you, Judy. Life would be such fun with you! Think of the good times we'd have."

She looked away from him, her gray eyes rather sad.

"I know; but it's not everything, having good times."

"Everybody would be so pleased," he went on. He leaned an arm on the driving wheel and looked earnestly into her face. "The guv'nor likes you, and you like him, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And your aunt doesn't dislike me, does she?"

"No."

"Why do you hesitate, then? You like me a little, don't you, Judy dear?"

"Yes, but"—she faced him bravely—"liking isn't loving."

"It will come," he assured her with confidence. "I can make you love me. I haven't had a chance yet. You're such a cold little thing, you hardly let me touch your hand."

"I don't believe love ever comes afterward, if it's not there at first." She shook her head. "I always think you should know at once—as soon as you meet a person—"

"Isn't that rather a storybook idea?" he asked gently.

She made no answer, and he took her hand and kissed it.

"Say you'll marry me, Judy!"

She drew her hand gently away.

"Where should we live, if—supposing—"

"Here, if you liked," Ronnie replied eagerly, "with the guv'nor; but of course, if you'd rather not, he'd understand—he's such a sport. He'd understand perfectly if we explained that you didn't want us both."

Judy avoided his eager eyes.

"I don't want you both," she said in her heart; but it was not Martin Shirley whom she would have excluded from her life, for Judy did not love Ronnie—she loved Ronnie's father.

"We'd live anywhere you like," Ronnie went on. He thought he was gaining ground. "I'd do anything in the world to please you and make you happy."

"You must give me time—"

"Judy, we've known each other more than six months. Some people are engaged and married in far less time."

Judy gave him a little wintry smile.

"And divorced, too!" she added.

He drew away from her angrily.

"Don't say such things!" he cried. "I hate it."

She touched his arm remorsefully.

"I'm sorry," said Judy. "I know you're not like the ordinary modern man. You don't hold women cheaply, and you believe in love and marriage and happiness, don't you, Ronnie?"

"The guv'nor brought me up to believe in those things," he answered almost resentfully.

Judy sighed.

"Yes, I am sure he would," she agreed. She was silent for a moment. "He would be desperately lonely without you," she said thoughtfully.

"I know!" Ronnie's young face grew troubled. "But he's such a sport," he repeated eagerly. "He knows it's got to come sooner or later. He's had his life, and I haven't had mine. Besides—" He hesitated. "If you wouldn't mind us all living together, of course it would make things easier."

"No, no!" There was a sharp pain in her voice. "I couldn't!" With an effort she steadied herself. "It never does for in-laws to live together. That's been proved over and over again."

In her heart she was saying desperately:

"I couldn't! I just couldn't bear it! I should want to be *his* wife, not yours! I should want *him* to make love to me, not you!"

But Martin Shirley had never shown her anything but the most ordinary kindness and courtesy. He had never betrayed his secret by as much as a look or word.

"I remember the first time I saw you, Ronnie," she went on, after a moment. "You were coming up the lane, both of you. You were laughing and talking, and the dogs were with you. That was before I really knew you, either of you, and I thought I had never seen two men look so wonderfully happy."

"So we were — are — always have been, I mean."

There was a confused note in Ronnie's voice, nevertheless, and a little wonder in his eyes. Things had changed since then; but why, and how?

"Will you do something for me?" Judy said suddenly.

"Anything in the world. Do you need to ask?"

She met his eyes steadily.

"Let me go to the opera alone with your father to-morrow night," she said. "I want to talk to him. Will you let me, Ronnie?"

His eyes were full of disappointment, but he answered at once.

"Of course, if you want to," he said. "Anything in the world. I'll tell the guv'nor when we get back."

"Perhaps he won't care to go with me."

Ronnie laughed.

"I dare say he'll want me to come, too. He hates going anywhere without me, but I'll manage him all right."

"I wonder if *I* shall be able to manage him!" Judy asked herself.

She knew what she meant to do—she meant to find out if there was any smallest hope that Ronnie's father might perhaps care for her.

They found Martin Shirley sitting in his study at the open window, looking out idly over the garden.

"Hello, guv'nor!" Ronnie laid an affectionate hand on his father's shoulder. "What have you been doing all day?"

"Doing?" Martin rose to his feet hurriedly, rousing himself with difficulty from his thoughts. "I've had a lazy day," he said, and looked at Judy apologetically. "I don't believe I've done anything at all," he told her guiltily, "except thinking."

"They must have been very interesting thoughts," Judy said.

Her pulses were racing, as they always did, when she was near Martin Shirley, and she met his eyes with an unconscious pathos in her own.

"Why can't he love me? Why can't he?" she was asking herself desperately.

She felt that her love must surely compel his, that her desire must bring forth some response; but Martin only laughed as he turned away.

"They were interesting thoughts," he said, "but to me only."

II

JOHN SHAW opened his laboratory door when he heard Judy coming downstairs, and looked out apologetically.

"I wanted—" he began, and stopped, for Judy was radiant in evening dress, her gray eyes misty with happiness, her cheeks flushed. "Oh, you're going out," he added disappointedly.

"Yes—to the opera," she replied, halting on the bottom stair and looking at him with affectionate eyes. Judy was very fond of John. She said he reminded her of a big, shaggy retriever. "I believe you'd do anything in the world for me," she teased him sometimes. "I believe you'd even go into the water and fetch sticks for me, if I asked you to."

John blushed.

"If it would do you any good—if it would make you happy—yes, you know I would."

He looked at her now with humble adoration in his eyes. She was like a fairy, he thought — a fairy princess, and he felt like *Caliban,* hopelessly loving her and bitterly conscious of his ugliness and lack of attraction.

"Which opera?" he asked.

"'Butterfly,'" she told him. She just touched his face with the feather tips of her big fan. "Do you like opera, John?"

"I've never had time to go." He came a step nearer to her. "With Shirley?" he asked.

"With Mr. Shirley — Ronnie's father," Judy told him.

"Oh!"

His relief was obvious, and Judy's heart sank. So John, too, thought there was no need to be jealous of Martin!

Ronnie had told her that his father had been difficult to persuade.

"She can't want to go with an old fellow like me," he had objected. "*You* take her. If you have any absurd scruples about leaving me alone—"

"It's not that, sir, but Judy suggested it herself. She really wants you to go."

"Very well, then—you come, too." Martin Shirley had forced a laugh. "I shan't know what to do with the child alone. Upon my word, it's years since I took a lady anywhere by myself!"

Judy had interrupted Ronnie's account of the interview to ask wistfully:

"Did he really call me a child?"

"He did. I suppose you are a child to him. However, I persuaded him. I told him you'd be awfully disappointed. I told him you wanted to talk to him."

"It's kind of him to take me," Judy said with stiff lips.

She almost wished she had not made the suggestion. Ever since she had been dreading the idea of being alone with Martin; and yet this evening, while she was dressing, hope had suddenly revived in her heart. Her mirror told her that she was young and

fair. She was wearing her prettiest frock, and at the last moment she leaned from her open window and picked a knot of sweet-scented jasmine to fasten in her white evening cloak. She felt happy and almost confident as she went downstairs and met John coming out of his laboratory. She read in his eyes that he found her desirable, and she wondered whether she would read the same thing in the eyes of Ronnie's father.

John put out one clumsy hand and touched the little knot of flowers at her breast.

"I wish you wouldn't wear that stuff," he said gruffly.

Judy opened her gray eyes wide.

"Oh, but why?"

He frowned, finding it difficult to put his thoughts into words.

"I always associate jasmine with unpleasant things—death and trouble. The smell of it hung about the house for days after my father died. Some one sent a wreath of it."

"I think it's beautiful," replied Judy, resenting his criticism of her choice. She bent her head and sniffed daintily at the starry blossoms. "You're an awful old croaker, John dear!"

Then John had a moment of eloquence.

"I love you," he said.

The warm blood rushed to Judy's face, for it was the first time he had ever told her so with such spontaneity, and she was both touched and sorry. Why did every one love her but the right man?

"I wish I loved you, too—in the way you want," she replied.

Then she caught her breath with a sharp little sound, as through the open door she saw Ronnie's father drive up, swing the car about, and come to a standstill.

"No waiting?" he said, as he left his seat to greet her. "This is marvelous! I quite expected to cool my heels for half an hour while you finished dressing. That's why I'm so early."

"I've been ready for ten minutes," Judy told him.

How young he looked, she thought! How boyishly he smiled and spoke. Fifty was no age at all, if Ronnie's father was fifty.

"This is an honor I have not had for many years," he said, as they drove away. "Perhaps you won't believe me when I tell you that the last time I took a lady out alone was twenty years ago, when I was a mere lad of thirty."

He thought of his wife as he spoke. Across the gap of years she stood and smiled at him; but now she seemed to belong to another world, another lifetime. For the first time he felt that no longer was he the man who had broken his heart for her. That man, too, seemed to stand far away, side by side with the girl in the blue frock—far away across the dividing years.

Those two belonged together; but he—the man he had become—had given himself over body and soul to Judy, who sat beside him in her white cloak.

"It's very kind of you to take me," she said in a prim little voice.

He glanced down at her. He could see only the oval of her cheek and the sweep of her lashes against it.

"It's kind of you not to mind being bored by an old fellow like me," he answered.

But he felt as if he were talking nonsense. Old? He had never felt younger in his life.

"I don't think you're old," Judy told him in a smothered voice. "You never bore me, either."

"You're a dear little girl," Martin said. "Poor old Ronnie, he must be feeling quite jealous of his father!"

Judy moved restlessly. She could see that he was determined not to let her forget the discrepancy in their ages. Never once would he bring himself down to her level, or allow her to climb up to his.

They went some way in silence. Then Judy said suddenly:

"Ronnie has asked me to marry him."

She waited breathlessly for Martin's reply; but when it came it was quite warm and unemotional.

"I know. It will make me very happy indeed, my dear, to have you for a daughter."

Judy almost cried out. She had to press her little feet in their silver shoes hard against the floor to control herself.

"But I don't love him," she said. "That was why I wanted to come out with you. I wanted to tell you—"

"Don't you think it would be better if you told Ronnie himself?" he interrupted gently.

"I have, but he won't believe me. He says that it will come—that he can make me love him."

"I am sure he can."

Judy laughed harshly. She felt as if she was fighting for her life.

"But I love some one else," she declared.

They were running into London now, and the increasing traffic brought them momentarily to a standstill.

"Why don't you tell Ronnie, then?" said Martin, when they moved on again.

Judy clenched her hands.

"I'm afraid to," she replied.

"Afraid!"

How deliberately he avoided looking at her! She felt as if she must clutch his arm with both her trembling hands and scream out:

"It's you! It's you! Are you just pretending, or don't you really care? I'm so frightfully unhappy! I can never be happy any more if you don't love me. Please—please!"

Suddenly she realized that tears were running down her face. Frightened and ashamed, she drew up the big collar of her white cloak to hide them from her companion.

Martin was having an altercation with the driver of another car, who had tried to cut through, and had nearly smashed them. The two men swore roundly at one another. Then Martin looked at Judy and apologized.

"I beg your pardon, but the man was a damned fool. There! Now I must apologize again."

Judy laughed tremulously.

"There's no need. I've heard people swear before. Ronnie often does. I don't mind."

"A chip of the old block, eh?" He was so maddeningly cheerful. Then, after a moment, he went on, reverting to the previous subject of conversation: "I can't understand any one being afraid of Ronnie. He's just the dearest chap, although he's my son."

"He's a darling," Judy agreed; "but I can't *make* myself love him, can I?"

"You're such a child," Martin Shirley said. "Don't you think that perhaps it's just a passing fancy on your part?"

"No!" The little word was almost a cry. "I know it's not. You can't mistake it when you're really in love—don't you know that?"

For an instant Martin thought of his dead wife—of their love for each other, and of their short-lived happiness; but now it was like something of which he had read, or of which some one had told him. Try as he would, he could not recapture either his passionate love for her or his despairing grief when she died.

"I loved Ronnie's mother," he said. "There has never been another woman in my life since I lost her." He laughed with attempted gayety. "I don't know why I am telling you all this. We don't seem to be too cheerful, and I had made up my mind to make you enjoy yourself and to give you a happy evening."

"I am always happy with you," Judy declared recklessly.

They were nearing the opera house in a long line of cars, and all Martin's

attention was engaged; but glancing up at him, half frightened by her own daring, Judy saw that his face was white and that his mouth was set in lines almost of anger.

"I shall have to put you down here and park the car," he said. His voice was impartial. "Wait in the foyer for me, and keep out of the cold. I shan't be long."

"Cold! Why, it's ever so warm," Judy said.

Her face was burning. When the car stopped, she got out and ran up the steps of the opera house, glad to escape. What was Martin Shirley thinking? Had he understood?

She went to the cloakroom and stared at herself in the mirror. She saw feverish eyes, and lips that would tremble. She wished she had not come. She wished she could go home without hearing "Butterfly." She was sure she would hate it. She hated everything. He did not love her. She was nothing to him but a child whom Ronnie wanted for his wife. Was it that, or was it that he was too unselfish to stand in his son's way?

The cloakroom was crowded with beautifully dressed women. They talked and laughed, and powdered their faces, and pushed one another in order to get to the mirrors. Judy went out into the foyer, and almost immediately Martin joined her.

"What a crowd!" he said. He put his hand under her arm. "I think we go this way."

She stumbled along beside him, almost blinded with a happiness that was half a tragic dread.

The touch of his hand on her arm seemed somehow to have reached her heart. It seemed impossible that he could not know, could not understand, could not see!

They were shown into their box.

"Ronnie tried to get stalls," Martin told her; "but this was the best he could do. I hope you don't mind sitting here."

He put her into the seat from which the best view could be obtained.

"It's going to be warm," he said. "May I take your cloak?"

She stood up.

"Thank you — please mind my flowers."

"Jasmine!" Martin said.

He stood motionless as the haunting perfume was wafted to him. In a flash he was back on the far-away summer's afternoon when Ronnie's girl mother lay dead in her blue frock with its short sleeves and frilly skirt, while outside in the garden life went on—the droning of the bees, the song of the birds, and above all the pervasive scent of this unforgettable perfume.

Judy touched his arm.

"What is the matter?" she asked gently.

With an effort he roused himself. He took her cloak, laid it across a chair back, and sat down beside her.

"I hope you can see all right," he said. His voice was almost like a stranger's. "Do you like chocolates? I've brought some. Ronnie said these were the best."

Judy drew back as if he had struck her.

"You treat me like a child!" she whispered passionately.

"Judy!"

She met his eyes, her own dark with pain.

"I'm *not* a child," she said tensely.

Martin knew then, and for a moment his heart seemed almost to leap from his breast. She loved him, this girl whom Ronnie loved! Perhaps she wanted of him all the things he wanted of her—to lay her head on his shoulder, to feel his kisses on her lips.

With a mighty effort he controled himself.

"I'm sorry," he said stupidly.

Sorry? Sorry for what? Sorry, with the blood pounding wildly in his veins and his eyes blinded with sheer happiness?

He leaned back in his chair as far

away from her as possible, his arms folded across his chest. He could feel how his heart was beating. To his own ears it seemed even to drown the orchestra, which had begun to play the prelude.

He kept his eyes fixed on the great stage curtain, for he dared not look at Judy again. She loved him, gray-haired and fifty years old as he was!

"Impossible!" he told himself, but he knew it was the truth.

If he chose, he could take her in his arms. If he chose, he could make her his wife—his wife, and Ronnie's stepmother.

Absurd! Ridiculous! He felt an insane desire to laugh. Ronnie's stepmother, this girl who was only the same age as that other girl had been when she died.

How Ronnie would hate it! How he would hate his father—the son who had been everything to Martin Shirley through twenty lonely years—the son who loved Judy and wanted her for his own!

Madness! What would the world say? A middle-aged man and a young girl! Martin had so often laughed at other men for committing the same folly, and now he was contemplating it himself. No, not contemplating it, but trying to thrust the temptation from him.

Ronnie would hate him, would never forgive him!

III

THE big curtains swung apart and the opera began. Martin Shirley was conscious of Judy's white, motionless figure beside him, but he dared not look at her. What was she thinking? What would she say if he took her hand and held it?

Oh, God, why had he come? It was Ronnie's fault. Ronnie had insisted, while he—no, better be honest with himself! He had wanted to come, had meant to come all the time, even while he raised a dozen objections.

The first act ended in a storm of applause, the curtains swung down and back again. Martin rose to his feet.

"Shall we go out and have a cigarette? Or would you like an ice?"

"No, thank you; but you go. I'll stay and watch the people."

He did not look at her, nor she at him. He went out into the corridor and shut the door of the box behind him.

Judy leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes. She had told him, as plainly as if she had spoken the actual words, that she loved him, and he had taken no notice. Oh, how ashamed she was! She wished she could die.

She had not listened to a note of the opera, had not heard anything, although her eyes, like Martin's, had never left the stage.

She sat motionless till the orchestra started again and Martin came back.

"This is my favorite act," he said perfunctorily. "I think the music is exquisite. The last time Ronnie and I came—"

He broke off, partly because he knew she was not listening, and partly because the old happy relationship between himself and Ronnie seemed like a thing of the past—a thing to remember, a thing that could never be the same again. This girl had come between him and Ronnie, and would always be between them, whichever one of them she married.

With an effort he roused himself, and with a sense almost of bravado he moved his chair a little closer to Judy's.

"Are you enjoying it?" he asked.

She caught her breath.

"I think it's very sad."

They spoke no more till the curtains had swung down on the pathetic little figure of *Butterfly* kneeling at the window, watching for the man she loved. The lights went up and Martin looked at the girl beside him. The tears were raining down her face, and she was sobbing quietly.

"Judy! Dear little Judy!"

She shrank away from him when he would have touched her, and rose to her feet.

"I want to go home," she said. "Please let me go home!"

He helped her into her cloak, and they went out into the corridor together.

"I shall have to leave you to fetch the car," Martin remarked stiffly.

"I don't mind."

She spoke listlessly. Nothing seemed to matter any more. She had failed.

When Martin came back, she was standing at the top of the steps watching the crowd with unseeing eyes. *Butterfly's* haunting air was ringing through her head:

"One fine day—one fine day—"

Butterfly had been full of hope, even as Judy had been—a hope which had ended in despair, as her own had done.

It began to rain a little as they drove away. Judy shivered and drew her cloak more closely around her. The fragrant knot of jasmine was dead, and hung forlornly. With a fierce little gesture she tore it from her and flung it through the window of the car into the street.

"Why did you do that?" Martin asked. "It would have revived in water."

She made no answer, for she was afraid to trust her voice. This was the end. In an hour they would be home again, back with Ronnie and John, who loved her, and whom she did not love.

"I think we'll get some supper," suggested Ronnie's father. "I know a nice quiet little place where we can talk."

"I'm not hungry. I'd rather go home."

He looked down at her, frowning.

"Tired of me already? I suppose, if I had been Ronnie, you would have gone on somewhere and danced half the night!"

It was the last thing he had meant to say, but it was fast becoming impossible to keep up an indifferent, paternal air with her arm touching his, and the sweetness and youth of her so close.

She made no answer to that, either.

"What's the matter, little Judy?" he asked.

She caught her breath.

"Nothing. I'm tired."

"And a little sad, too—eh?"

"No, only—"

She left the sentence unfinished, and he asked no questions. They turned out of the Strand, and Martin stopped the car in a side street.

"We shall both feel better after supper," he said with forced cheeriness, as he helped her out.

Leaving the car in charge of a commissionaire, he took Judy through the swing doors and downstairs to a quiet little restaurant.

"No jazz bands here," he said, "and only a few people. We'll have the corner table."

He ordered supper, but Judy hardly listened. She did not care to eat, for the thought of food choked her. When the waiter had gone, Martin laid his hand over hers, which were clasped in her lap.

"We'll talk presently," he said.

He felt her start and tremble beneath his touch, and he cursed himself for his folly.

It was a poor pretense of a meal; but when the coffee was brought, and they were practically alone, Martin said quietly:

"Do you know how old I am, Judy?"

"Yes."

"I am fifty—twenty-five years older than you are."

She said in a choking voice that age didn't matter.

"Not now, perhaps," he agreed; "but in ten years' time—"

She raised her gray eyes, dark with pain, to his face.

"I'm really much older than you think I am," she said brokenly. "If you love any one—"

He looked away from her.

"When I am sixty, I shall probably be bald and stout, and I'll want to sit by the fire and sleep instead of coming to places like this," he said humorously.

"I should love to sit by the fire with you," she replied quickly.

He shook his head.

"And see Ronnie going out to dance and play tennis? You would soon get tired of it. Why, I might even snore!"

Tears started to her eyes. She could not picture this man as either fat or bald, and as for snoring—well, if he wanted to, she would love to hear him snore. She pictured herself and him, one on either side of the fire on a winter's evening; or perhaps she would sit on the arm of his chair, her cheek against his shoulder.

"As if things like that count!" she said with scorn.

"But they do," he insisted gently. "Some day you will know that I spoke the truth, and you will thank me for it."

So he did not love her! Her tears suddenly dried on her scorching cheeks.

"I want to go home," she said.

He called the waiter and paid the bill. Without another word they went upstairs and drove away.

"One fine day—one fine day!"

How the haunting air tormented her! She would hate it all her life. She had dreamed such great things of to-night, and now it was all over!

It was raining faster. Big drops splashed the windows and trickled down like tears. Neither Judy nor Martin spoke till they stopped at the door of the house where Judy was staying. Then she valiantly roused herself from her apathy, and tried to speak naturally.

"Good night, and thank you very much," she said.

He groped through the darkness and found her hand.

"I'm afraid you have not enjoyed it," he said stiffly.

"Oh, I have! I—" Suddenly she broke down. "I wish I were dead!" she sobbed.

"Judy!" He gathered her into his arms as if she had been a child. "Don't cry like that! I can't bear it. Judy!"

"You don't love me! You don't love me!" she wailed.

For a moment he sat very still, and once again he saw his dead wife's face, but still more dimly—so far away that it looked unreal, like a wistful ghost. For twenty years there had been no woman in his life. He was fifty, and the best of his years were going quickly.

He took Judy's face deliberately between his hands and kissed her lips.

"I adore you!" he said.

IV

Judy lay awake all night. She kept the light on in her room, for somehow she was afraid of the dark, and of her own thoughts.

Her lips burned with Martin's kisses, and yet she was not happy. Just now she had slipped out of bed and lifted the blind, to look across the road. There had been a light in Martin Shirley's room opposite, too. Perhaps he could not sleep, either; perhaps he was feeling as she was—perplexed, tormented.

The last thing he had said to her had been:

"Let me tell Ronnie, will you, Judy dear?"

"No, no—let me tell him," she had cried.

But she knew it would be equally impossible for either of them to tell him. Ronnie, who loved them both, trusted them both—would he ever forgive either Judy or his father?

"We can't help loving each other," Judy defended herself, but somehow it did not help.

She thought of the first time she had ever seen them, father and son, striding up the road together one spring evening, with the dogs, who adored them both, leaping and bounding

around them. She had never seen two people so happy and care-free. If she married Martin, would she ever see them look like that again? Ronnie would never forgive his father. What was it he had said?—"The guv'nor's had his life, and I haven't had mine."

That was true enough, and yet—

Just for a little while she had been in paradise, when Martin took her in his arms and kissed her; but as soon as he had gone she felt guilty, conscience-stricken, afraid.

She had come between them already, and if she married Martin it would mean the end of their happy comradeship. Ronnie would go away, and Martin—perhaps some day she would see bitterness and reproach in his eyes.

She recalled her own impulsive words:

"I should love to sit by the fire with you."

To be with him to the end of his life or hers—to have him for her very own!

Ronnie had talked so much of his life with his father—of the things they had shared, the pleasures they had enjoyed. They had made the garden between them, they had collected all the sporting prints that hung in the library, they had built the greenhouse with their own hands. Martin had taught his son everything he knew, and to come between them seemed almost a crime.

"But I love him, and I shall never love any one else," Judy told herself with the despair of youth.

And yet she knew that it would give her no happiness to marry Martin, if by doing so she alienated him from Ronnie. It would give Martin no happiness, either. Instead of loving her, as they both did now, some day they might both hate her.

She thought of them again as she had first seen them, swinging up the road through the spring sunshine, perfectly happy in their complete comradeship.

Daylight was coming. Judy crept out of bed and lifted a corner of the shade. It was going to be a lovely day. "One fine day—one fine day!" She felt like poor little *Butterfly* watching in vain for the dawn and for the man she loved.

There was a stir in the house behind her, and she turned to listen. That would be John going down early to his laboratory, to finish some engrossing piece of work—dear old John, who also loved her!

Judy ran across the room and opened the door. She forgot that she was wearing only a nightgown. She looked like a slender child as she went out on the landing and softly called the name of the big, clumsy man who was tiptoeing downstairs with his shoes in his hand, so as not to disturb any one.

"John!"

He turned, his face flushing crimson as his eyes rested upon her.

"John!" She stole to the head of the stairs, and, resting both hands on the balusters, looked over them at him. "How well do you love me, John?" she whispered.

She saw his lips move, but no words came. He shook his head dumbly.

"Well enough to marry me?"

"Judy!"

Judy stifled a little laugh, which was half a sob, as she saw the amazement in his face.

"We'll catch the early train to London," she said, "and be married at a registrar's. Can it be done?"

"You're laughing at me!" John said huskily.

Judy wetted a trembling finger and drew it across her white throat.

"'See that wet—see that dry!' You know what we used to say when we were children, John."

"Yes, but—"

She stamped her bare foot on the cold, polished floor.

"Do you want me or not?"

"Do I want you? My God, Judy!"

Judy closed her eyes for a moment

before the passion in his. Then she opened them and smiled.

"Put your shoes on, then, and get some money, while I dress. Be quick. The train goes at half past six."

She fled back to her room. She gave herself no time to think of the past. She dressed with shaking fingers, her mind running ahead all the while.

She would never see hatred in Martin's eyes or in Ronnie's. John would take her abroad. She knew that a position had been offered him, and that he had only hesitated on her account. Now he should accept it—she would make him. They would go together, hundreds of miles away, and never come back, unless—unless—no, they would never come back. She would not dare.

She went down and met John in the hall.

"Judy—" he began hoarsely, his face white.

She caught his hand.

"Don't argue! We shall miss the train."

They almost ran to the station, Judy laughing and talking all the time. Afterward it seemed to her that she never ceased running and talking and laughing until, hours later, she heard some one say something about—

"May I congratulate you, Mrs. Shaw?"

She awoke then with a great start. There was a wedding ring on her finger, and the registrar—a quiet, kind-eyed little man—was smiling at her and John.

"Judy!" said John huskily.

Judy shivered. Then, with an effort, she pulled herself together and gave him her hand; but though her lips smiled up into his agitated face, she did not see him. She saw the figures of Ronnie and his father as she had first seen them, smiling and happy in their complete comradeship, striding along the road through the sunshine—Martin and his son, who now would never look at her with hatred in their eyes.

OTHER SPRINGS

THE joy we know this early spring,
Dear love, is not its own;
We feel the urge of other springs
That you and I have known.

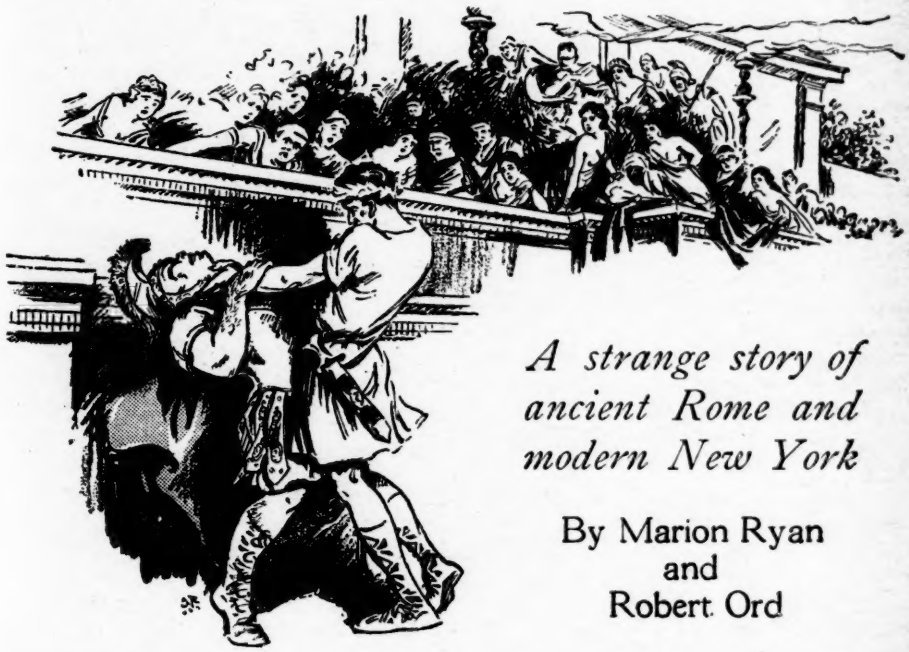
Each spring that comes, we live anew
The spring when first we met,
The miracle of sudden love,
The leaves all green and wet!

And then one happy spring we pledged
Our solemn vows and wed,
While choral music burst from throats
Of gold and brown and red.

So when this spring lies in the past
And new ones follow on,
They'll show its joy, as it has shown
The others that are gone!

Sonia Ruthèle Novák

The Heat Wave



A strange story of ancient Rome and modern New York

By Marion Ryan
and
Robert Ord

IT was noon of an August day, and out of a sky of molten lead the sun glared pitilessly down upon the panting city. New York was in the stifling smother of a heat wave such as the oldest inhabitants could not remember having experienced before. The fiery visitation had lasted for several days, and showed no sign of breaking.

Morning after morning the sun rose triumphantly waving golden streamers, to blaze relentlessly through fifteen hours. When at last it subsided into a scarlet bed, the night brought no relief in the heavy pall that closed down upon a gasping people.

Relief organizations were working overtime, extra water carts were flushing the streets. Free deliveries of ice melted away as they were doled out, and electric fans circulated only a sirocco. Prayers for rain were vainly offered in the churches. Men went coatless and collarless, women fainted over their household duties and in the streets or shops, children cried from sheer misery. Paint blistered and peeled in the heat, the grass in the parks and squares was seared and blackened as if by fire, and the leaves of the trees curled up like scraps of tissue paper.

And still the sun blazed down and the pavements blazed back, seeming to scorch the feet that trod on them as the sun scorched people's faces. Listless indeed were those passing feet—almost too listless to shuffle onward, were it not for the terrible urge to get

somewhere — anywhere — out of the swelter.

It was the luncheon hour, which brought a brief respite from the drudgery of work and the tyranny of authority, both so much magnified in the torturing heat. The weary feet shuffled on, and presently there came among them a firmer, quicker tread. Some one was actually hurrying. Some one, strange to say, still had vitality enough to hurry.

A few of the shufflers turned and looked at Paul Feron as he strode up the avenue. He was a tall, handsome lad in his early twenties. His shoulders were square and straight, his head with its thick, black hair was held high, his broad chest heaved, and his eyes flashed angrily. He was as oblivious of the passers-by as of the fact that he was wearing no hat and that the sun was blazing down mercilessly upon his uncovered head.

A man caught him by the arm.

"What's the matter, buddy? Tired of life? Want to get sunstroke, so as to collect your insurance?"

The youth flung himself away, unseeing, unhearing, with the perspiration streaming down his face as he walked on and on. Only one thing mattered—he was free at last, free by his own act. For the first time since he had been in that unendurable office he felt himself a man again.

No more submission to that swine, Behren! How he loathed the fellow! Paul had not wanted to lose his job, for jobs were hard enough to get; but Behren was more than any one could stand. How they all hated the man, with his mean way of spying on his subordinates, his vile temper, and his cold, cruel insults!

Anyway, Paul was free of it now. What a hellish life it had been! He would not have stood it for all these months if it had not been for Beth. She had been so anxious about ways and means, and they had married on almost nothing but love and hope for the future. Such a pretty little soft thing, Beth, with her great blue eyes! He would endure almost anything for her.

Well, he had endured it for months —all the systematic persecution of himself and those about him, all the sneers of that fat slug with his small round head on his great unwieldy body. That's what Behren was like, by Jove —a great slug! His white face with the beady eyes, his sleek yellow hair, and the roll of flesh at the back of his neck—how Paul Feron had hated them!

Think, too, of the injustice of the petty tyrant! Paul had hardly taken the job before Behren had a knife into him. Anything he did was wrong, even if Mr. Barnes, the other partner, praised it.

If good old Barnes had not been away from town, perhaps the scene of this morning would not have happened. Surely he would not have stood by and watched Behren badger poor little Lou Harding, shaking his fat hand in her funny little face, framed in those great spectacles she wore. Like a madman, the bullying brute was hot one minute and then all of a sudden he became cruel and cold.

Yes, things had certainly come to a head that morning. Lou had been crying over a slight mistake, which had put Behren in a furious rage. Paul Feron had looked on in silent indignation until he could stand it no longer, and then he had told Behren just what he thought of him, two or three different ways. Lord, it was good to get it off his chest!

Behren was so astonished that his fat jaw dropped and his face turned purple before he pulled himself together and hissed to Paul to leave the office at once. Any money due him would be sent to him, and he was not to apply to Behren & Barnes for recommendation. Paul shouted back that he was glad to be fired, and that he would teach Behren to behave himself

before he finished. Then, somehow, he and Lou had found themselves out of the room, with Behren smiling horribly at them from the door and Lou crying in gasps.

Oh, how hot it was!

He stopped suddenly. He had reached the park, and there was a bench under a tree which invited him to its shade. He flung himself down with legs outstretched and hands hanging. Suddenly he felt terribly, overpoweringly tired.

Well, he had burned his boats. He would have to go home and tell Beth. She would be anxious, naturally, and she would be upset about poor little Lou Harding, too. Of course, Paul had to stand by Lou. Any man would —a thin, miserable scrap of a girl like that, working so hard and getting so little for it!

Beth and Lou—Lou and Beth—and Behren. How Paul hated Behren! How he loathed him and his cruel smile and his fat neck!

II

THE sun swung high in a sky of brass. Its burning rays even penetrated the purple splendor of the gold-fringed awnings over the seventy thousand perspiring people who sat or sprawled on the marble benches, gasping with heat and excitement, their dripping bodies swaying with the motion of the contests below.

The atmosphere was stifling, in spite of the perfumed showers that were projected intermittently over the audience. The stench that rose from the arena, the reek of the wild beasts, and the salty smell of blood, combined with the smothering dust and the sweltering heat, made the place almost insupportable.

The drought had lasted more than three months, and the country was suffering terribly. Fields and vineyards were sun-scorched wastes. In the cities it was worse, and worst of all in Rome, where the Tiber crawled, low and oily, its fetid banks exhaling miasma.

Yet the Colosseum was packed for the celebrations in honor of the emperor's birthday. The populace had been promised a week of unparalleled entertainment, and the empire had been swept from end to end for sensational contributions. The strongest and fiercest lions from Libya had been procured, and a hundred malefactors, gathered from the dungeons of Rome, together with some twenty of the hated Christians, arrested on trumped-up accusations of disloyalty, were to be thrown to them.

He was sitting beside the emperor, his head wreathed with bays placed there by the great Titus himself. Was it only two days ago that he had leaped into the arena when Myrtilla, the beautiful patrician maiden, had challenged the young nobles of Rome to encounter a lion single-handed? It had been a great fight, for the lion was a particularly ferocious brute which had already destroyed three of the emperor's bravest gladiators; but he had killed it, and he had been fêted and flattered ever since.

What a world it was! Only two days ago he was but a simple, unknown youth, albeit of noble blood, and today the excited people had shouted his name — "Ferronius! Ferronius!"— when he entered the emperor's box. This was fame, he supposed; but to him there was something sinister in that great crowd, panting with the heat and its own lust for blood. His glance swept the tiers of men and women anxiously.

Where was Marcellus? As official chief at the Colosseum, he should have been at his post by now.

Many eyes met those of Ferronius as they roved along the benches where lounged senators and magistrates and the fairest women of Rome. There were eyes curious and eager, and eyes soft and languorous; but he ignored them all. Even the alluring glance of

Myrtilla, who, swathed in gold tissue with yellow lilies in her hair, reclined on the silken cushions near him, failed to thrill him. Perhaps it might have meant more to him were it not for the memory of a flowery hillside and a slender, white-clad figure, a little hand in his, a golden head resting upon his shoulder.

He shivered slightly, and looked around again apprehensively. Marcellus was late, surely! Ah, there at last was the thick, short, glittering figure pressing toward the emperor, while the crowds muttered as he passed; for men feared and hated his power and his cruelty.

Now the manager of the show was bowing before Titus; but why did he not meet the anxious gaze of Ferronius? Surely all must have been arranged as he had agreed! It was not much for Marcellus, with all his power, to accomplish—the removal of just one name from the list of Christians arrested, the smuggling of one slender girl from prison.

Had Ferronius only known what fame would be his for the mere killing of a lion, he would have gone to the emperor himself; but by that time Marcellus had received his bribe. Surely Ferronius had paid the contemptible creature liberally enough! Surely he must in a moment give a reassuring glance!

Ah, there at last he had turned and nodded! All was well. In his small, cold, narrow eyes there was a gleam of something like triumph; but he had nodded. Vedia was safe—golden little Vedia, who, with her hand in her lover's, had told Ferronius of Christ and of the new gospel of peace and mercy. What did it matter what she said, when her voice was so sweet, her eyes so blue? And now she must be safe, back in her home on the hillside, waiting for him to come and take her away. Oh, he would go to-night, as soon as he could get away—Marcellus had nodded!

A roar from the amphitheater brought his thoughts back again. Marcellus had staged a duel between two gladiators who drove into the arena in chariots, and there was a heavy crash as the vehicles came into collision, each driver trying to upset the other. The noise was terrific, with the splitting of wood, as wheels, poles, and other parts of the shattered chariots flew in all directions; the screams of the injured horses, kicking and plunging in the wreckage; the hoarse shouts of the gladiators, on the ground, now, and lunging furiously at each other; and the yells of the audience, thirsting for bloodshed and impatient of the clouds of dust that partially obscured the combatants.

It was not a long fight, for one of the gladiators had been hurt in the collision, and he was brought down by a mighty thrust of his antagonist's heavy sword, which he was too weak to parry. Seventy thousand voices clamored for the death blow as the victor, with one foot on his fallen enemy's chest, flung up the hand that grasped the dripping, questioning sword, and turned toward the emperor.

Before answering, Titus stooped to Myrtilla. Instantly she sprang to her feet, her lovely body gleaming through her golden veil.

"He was a craven!" she cried. "He fought ill!"

A turn of her thumb sent the unfortunate wretch to his end. How like a tigress she seemed as she coiled back on her purple cushions!

As she leaned forward again to smile at Ferronius, a new sound echoed through the vast building—a wild, thunderous roar—the roar of hungry, maddened beasts. At a sign from Marcellus the soldiers had raised the gratings in front of the subterranean dens, and six huge lions had rushed out, fighting, snarling, leaping over one another, tearing up the sand in a murky smother.

They glared at the white faces that

glared back from the seats above them. Maddened by hunger and by the wild shouts that greeted them, they sprang upon the low wall that separated the arena from the auditorium and clawed and worried the massive bronze railing that surmounted it. The soldiers, hurling missiles at the frenzied brutes, exasperated them to even greater fury. Marcellus stood there laughing, his fat white face distorted, his shoulders shaking.

Then, quite suddenly, he gave a sign. A further gate opened and a score of shivering, stumbling wretches were driven ruthlessly into the arena. Behind them the gate clanged to, and some of the Christians, stricken with panic, turned and clung to its bars, frantically beating at them and screaming in terror.

There followed an indescribable scene—a welter of shrieks and snarls, of struggles and mutilations, as the lions fought over their prey, their fearful, coughing roars mingling with the death cries of their victims and the exultant shouts of the people.

Once again the eyes of Ferronius sought Marcellus. The man was standing there, gloating over the awful pit, with his thick lips hanging moist and red, his small eyes glittering as his head protruded from the roll of fat at the back of his neck—more bestial, Ferronius thought, than the beasts themselves.

"By all the gods," he muttered to himself, "that man is the most loathsome thing in all Rome!"

Even as he murmured, Marcellus met his gaze for an instant. Then, smiling horribly, the director of the show turned and signaled once more to the soldiers.

Again a gate opened, and there, there, to the unutterable horror of Ferronius, was Vedia! She stood alone in the opening, her slender body trembling, but her head bravely erect, though tears were in her eyes and her lips quivered.

For a moment he was paralyzed. He thought that his heart must burst. Then there was a great cry of anguish—was it his?

Vedia heard. She flung out her arms toward him, as he leaped for the railings; but even as he sprang, three of the lions were upon her, and the little white figure was blotted out by their tawny, writhing bodies as they tore at her. One long, quivering scream and it was over.

With that last cry ringing in his ears, Ferronius raced headlong to the gangway and leaped upon Marcellus where he stood, still smiling. No lion more quick or strong than the furious avenger as he pinned the traitor to the wall and seized his loathsome throat with long, sinewy hands—hands whose grip of steel had torn a lion's jaws apart but two days before.

To and fro the two men rocked in a deadly embrace. Marcellus, struggling with the strength of desperation, dealt battering blows at his assailant, but Ferronius never felt them. All the hatred of the world was in his soul, all the passion of the world in his strong hands. He felt only that gross, fat throat into which his fingers were boring.

He never saw the spectators rise from their seats, craning their necks, forgetful of the ravening lions and the little tattered heap of whiteness beaten and trampled into the dust of the arena, as they gaped wildly at the unprecedented sight of a mortal combat waged close to the stately seat of the emperor himself.

He never saw the great Titus raise his hand, and Myrtilla pull it down, her cruel eyes fixed upon the fighters. He saw nothing but that flat, white face so close to his own and turning purple as he gripped the throat of Marcellus with relentless hands.

He did not hear Myrtilla's eager cry:

"Let be! Let be! 'Tis good to watch!"

He did not hear the yells of the people, the shouts of the soldiers as they threatened him with their swords, yet refrained from striking, in fear of injuring their commander, so tightly were the swirling bodies locked. He did not notice the sobbing, rattling gasps of the man whom he was strangling. He heard nothing but Vedia's last heartbreaking cry.

To and fro over the marble seats they thrashed and swung. At length the purple face was turning black and the gross body sagging. With a mighty effort Ferronius lifted it high in the air and hurled it down—down among the lions.

And, as it spread-eagled from his arms, a shattering crash descended upon his head and darkness closed around him.

III

A DAZZLING streak of lightning, a mighty clap of thunder, and Paul Feron, suddenly awakened, sprang to his feet with white face and staring eyes. What had happened? God, what had happened?

He pushed back the wet hair from his forehead as a hand grasped his shoulder and shook him roughly.

"Here, what's the matter with you, sitting out in the pouring rain?" a voice said. "Been drinking too much hootch? I've a mind to run you in, I have!"

Paul smiled feebly at the policeman.

"It's all right, officer. I was dead beat when I came in here. Heat got me, I guess. Thank the Lord for the rain!"

The policeman nodded.

"Yep, heat wave's broke at last, and just about time. There's more nutty people around the town than I ever saw before. Had about all I could stand of it."

He strolled away. Paul looked at his watch. He had been away from the office four hours. Incredible! Well, he must get back at once; but where was his hat? Surely he had it when he came into the park.

Then he remembered that there was no office to go back to. What he must do was go home to Beth and tell her all that had happened.

How queer he felt! It seemed as if he was some one else—not Paul Feron at all. Well, that fearful pressure on his head had gone. He was wet through, but it was cooler, and that was the great thing, after all.

He hurried to the Subway and caught a train uptown. Every one was talking to every one else, thankful for the blessed relief from the burning sun, and exchanging tales of the great heat wave which had broken at last.

They did not seem real to him, somehow. They were like people in a dream; but Beth would be real. He had a great longing to see Beth, to hold her close, close to him.

Up the stairs to his apartment he raced two steps at a time. At the sound of his key in the lock Beth was at the door. She was as pale as death, and her eyes were red-rimmed.

"Paul, Paul!" she gasped. "Where have you been? I thought you weren't coming back to me at all. I thought you had—"

Paul laughed as he held out a wet arm.

"Taking a rain bath in the park," he said.

"Oh, Paul, don't you understand—about Mr. Behren? You shouldn't be here!"

"What do you mean? I don't know anything. I've been sitting in the park for four hours."

"But, Paul"—her voice wavered and broke—"you were seen coming out of the office just an hour ago, they say, and your hat was there in Mr. Behren's room. He was found strangled—choked to death! And oh, Paul, Paul, the police are here waiting for you!"

He stared at her with horror in his eyes.

Extravagant Women Create Prosperity

Husbands and fathers may disagree with this idea, but what can they do about it?

By A. R. Pinci

MANY are the causes which have been variously pointed out by officials, economists, and laymen to explain the phenomenal well-being of the United States to-day. The most important factor, however, has been ignored or overlooked. That factor is the American woman. She is the fountainhead of our supplemental wealth, to distinguish it from the everyday wealth which just keeps things going.

To the American woman belongs the credit for the vast strides being made in our buying and spending power. While the women of this country are adding to their own wealth they have simultaneously become the greatest spenders in the world's history. The women who would not risk a cent in any speculative enterprise gleefully spend a dollar for what they consider a dollar's worth of satisfaction.

The average Asiatic woman would not spend in a lifetime, if she had the money, what the average young American woman nonchalantly spends in a month. As for the European woman, none exists, as yet, who makes of her spending such a riotous, joyous, and extravagant pastime after the feminine fashion here. Monte Carlo has never witnessed a gambler risking a bet with the careless indifference, not to mention supreme confidence, with which an American female shopper gambles her dollars on something likely to be outfashioned before she gets it home.

Moralists, preachers, and philosophers have taken notice, more or less ineptly, of this national one-sex fever. Most of them have become lugubrious about it. The remainder just do not know what to make of it. Yet it is not a problem of either morals or religion, for immorality or irreligiousness have not been superinduced by it.

The last five years or so have been lived under what is popularly described as a thrift administration, but where is the administration that could convince these American Eves that spending money is naughty or dangerous? Has Calvin Coolidge been around in Massachusetts since I said good-by to him in Boston in 1920? He ought to take a few hours off and meander through the Main Streets he knows, or knows of, in that neighborhood. If he doesn't see a mob of women at any store counter spending together as much as his governor's salary amounted to I shall smoke the stogy he offered me.

It is these women, the country over, who are making prosperity.

American women are making prosperity day and night, for they are not afraid of the dark. They are becoming the main pillars of public service corporations at the same time that they make freest use of their services or products. Nothing is more misleading to-day, for example, than the "parlor dimness." The dim-lighted parlor corner of the past generation is no more, and there is dimness, but it is indirect lighting as preached by the new decorative fashions. If one looks behind the many fancy shades one perceives enough bulbs to make an 1890 husband and father crazy on the spot.

When the modern Mary Jane, her ma and her grandma and great-aunt turn on the lights the day is not done, not by far. It has just begun. These women are not going to indulge in the "evening quiet hour" depicted by old-fashioned woodcuts, with scarcely a word being exchanged until bedtime. There will be no chairful of girlishness reading Bertha M. Clay, nor a rockerful of grandma knitting, nor a stoolful of big sister strumming "Forgotten."

Obviously such a change in the scene should be mournful to publishers, wool men and piano-makers. But who has heard a peep from them? In the course of my financial and industrial surveys I heard nothing except plans for more "pep" in production and sales work, notwithstanding the fact that selling to-day is being taken for granted. The chief problem is to keep buying interest at high pitch, and to be prepared for the sudden shift of fashions and ideas and customs.

Twenty years ago the growing girl of "boy friend" mindedness began to consider herself *déclassé* because the family ate its meals in the kitchen, and myriad insurrections in American households suddenly led to large homes, with elaborate if often preposterous furnishings. Then, lo! There came the electric toaster, grill, percolator, and thenceforth the kitchen was brought to the dining room.

It seemed as if the social caste of an average home could best be determined by the number of electrical appliances which the family owned. Just as everybody got used to that, the scene shifted again and back to the kitchen most of America is going, through the dinette, breakfast-nook and whatnot. No wonder business is going on!

Certainly the American women have not stopped reading books. Clerks and stenographers go to work carrying the latest best seller and one or two magazines. Once I tried to add up the probable value in books and periodicals which women carried on a street car on which I was riding, and I gave it up at nineteen dollars. A score of years ago it would have been futile to think of discovering the same relative amount.

When do these women read? Maybe they will scan a few pages on their employers' time, but they may be seen munching their drug store luncheon with a book propped before their malted milk. It serves to eliminate the tedium of a long ride home. Some must read in their sleep, because one never sees them reading elsewhere, and yet they appear to be conversant with the latest book, which usually is jazzed up for its screen appearance.

Since knitting went out of business

as a postprandial duty it has not been evident that the dears have gone about illy clad. There has been no shortage of socks, stockings, sockettes, stockinettes, invisibles, hose, mufflers, sweaters, vests, coats, scarfs—try to knit the number by hand! Shortage? No!

The American women shortened their skirts and put a taboo on darning, just as "darn" has become its honest masculine self on their carmined lips. Nor has any one learned of a higher mortality among knitting goods manufacturers, while some begin to wonder if the silkworms will suffice in the future to incase the potential number of legs which professors tell us must exist in the year 2492—the thousandth anniversary of America's discovery by Columbus and about the five hundredth by the women themselves.

The greatest spenders in the world's history

The piano makers were reported as more or less troubled by the advent first of the phonograph and then of radio. To-day America does not need piano salesmen. What it needs in the average instrument store is antisalesmen, persons to keep American women from buying. With some radios at one thousand dollars becoming commonplace, one might almost expect a free piano as a premium, but the fact is that pianos sell, and sell quickly. The cheapest ones are said to make, once disemboweled, the best bootleg cabinets extant. I have seen an example in Washington, District of Columbia, invented by an American girl who liked the case but not the tone. That girl is another prosperity breeder, no matter how you look at it, for a new and better piano will follow as a matter of course.

Speaking of music, it seemed as if radio might halt some of this prosperity, but as it did not long remain a man's instrument the fear never materialized. For every man who closets himself with his favorite radio circuit, a thousand women are navigating by as many dials in the realm of melody. Half an hour after a crazy tune has come forth, the party breaks up. Bed? Not on one's tintype, but to freshen up. Dancing at home is a clumsy effort.

Whereupon out into the night go couples and groups, to dine, to see the theater or the movies or to dance. This means taxis, cars, clothes, light, food, help, work, and for once American women have proceeded to disprove the old saw about "early to bed." Wise? Ask any man. He knows.

So it goes. The American woman's beringed fingers will be found stirring up prosperity. She looks it and feels it. The men about her must do the same. In many cases they merely look it, because most men are not mentally malleable, but their contribution to the wheels of the nation's industry and wealth is considerable. The once pitied wallflower is no longer female. Such few as there are have become male.

II

It seems that the American woman is making an involuntary spendthrift

of her men folks. Twenty years ago, as swains of that period will recall, men considered themselves masters of creation, generous, liberal, in proportion to their expenditures, whether for, or in courtship, or the home. If pa broke the news that a new rocker, or a young horse, was purchased by him that day, the family's exuberance and adoration made itself felt for weeks and months. The young chap with two theater tickets or simply the price of two sodas was accorded corresponding attention. It was male-sent manna; the women of that day so considered it.

But has that changed? It has. And how! the modern young people say. Nowadays the average American has made a gift long before he is aware of it, especially if his credit is good. That is as it should be. He ought to be thankful for being spared the trouble of doing the buying. He can devote his time to golf and the motor car.

There is still the custom of celebrating Christmas in the United States, but in any family where there is one woman or several women, Christmas is likely to come every day. Father may or may not feel the burden, but the fact is that if this state of affairs suddenly terminated he might simultaneously become jobless. Most men to-day owe their jobs to the spending proclivities of other men's womenfolk.

Man is still tenaciously thrifty. No man would sally forth to spend money the way a woman does, and this is what accounts for the new prosperous America, with due allowance, of course, for the less fortunate spots. Who remembers the misgivings of the 1900 woman who deprecated daddy's or hubby's generosity, and her adjectives of fearful reproof and timid alarm?

"What's money for?" he would say, self-conscious, superior, proud.

He has learned what it is for. It is to spend, seriously and care-freely both, to be thrifty by spending efficiently, to be healthy by buying joy and pleasure. Men have little to say about this money-spending, partly because men have automatically permitted the womenfolk to open the family purse and chiefly because women have more money than men. The latter is especially true of young wage-earners.

When a stenographer — female — gets from five to twenty dollars a week more than a bank teller—male—she has the advantage in forcing prosperity, so long as her job lasts, because she makes her own. I have known of female office workers who get thirty dollars a week buying not only two pairs of silk stockings every fourth pay day, but in one case seven pairs of shoes in nine months.

The soles of those shoes went to polish up many dance floors, no doubt, but masculine footgear can work havoc with a woman's slippers the very first time they meet. Ask the women's shoe salesmen! Under-the-table pedal telegraphy has not become a lost science.

No man buys as many shoes as a woman. And as for socks, where is the man who boasts of twenty pairs a year? Not even the business man who hires the twenty-pair girl has as many.

The "nickel nurser" is supposed to be a poker-bred creature, but the five-and-ten cent stores reveal innumerable nickel nursers of the male species—but not the female. The sweet young thing and her mother can make a dime's worth look like a million dollars, as the saying goes, but it was not until the modern woman, with countless nickels and dimes, descended through its aisles that the "V and X" stores put on a grand air.

Once it was slum shopping, but to-day the difference between customers is undetectable, in the main, even though their daily income differs a hundredfold. The famous Woolworth Building is made up of woman's small cash; man perhaps did not contribute more than the basement and roof.

Man is still conservative in such a store. The nickel remains the twenti-

eth of a dollar to him. He buys wonderingly, as if bankruptcy were staring him in the face. While a man gingerly and hesitatingly takes up articles here and there, the woman beside him breezes along from this to that, examining largely for quality and color, dropping her nickels and dimes unconcernedly. Perhaps at the lunch counter she may have to do without an item or two, but a glance at what she has bought reassures her and temporarily stays her unsatisfied hunger.

Women scorn the demagogue

The woman in the United States "shoots it all." Money and its associated independence have come to her rather suddenly and she is having a gorgeous time trying it out. The knack of spending money is easily and pleasantly acquired. The dollar in a woman's purse here knows neither nationality nor language; it is not happy unless it moves on, forever, since even maceration does not end its existence.

Of course, when man counts his nickels in this era he may do it as a matter of habit, with no desire or intention of being parsimonious. It is the urge of the ages as the provider of the family which crystallizes in him, but now that families are getting smaller and women richer, what chance has he? The courageous man to-day is not he who goes to war, but the one who says that he will take his girl out and will not spend more than a couple of dollars, or whatever it is he plans to spend.

All things being equal, man is at disadvantage. He must spend for himself and woman or women, whereas woman spends for herself. A man getting fifty dollars a week must usually buy pastimes for two, set aside for his future and keep his own self going. If his girl gets thirty dollars a week she is as rich as he is, because her expenses and responsibilities are substantially lower if they exist at all.

III

How shall we account for the four hundred million dollars estimated as having been spent in beauty parlors in 1928? And the one billion dollars for appearance's sake, in the way of externals? Maybe some women will disagree with my journalistic finding, but ninety-nine per cent of these vast totals, two of many others, was her particular investment and share of the dinner, theater, automobile ride, dance, picnic, vacation. She has to doll up. But unfortunately for mere man, she often looks so scrumptious and wonderful that his decision not to spend more than a dollar and eighty cents is forgotten. Who got it?

Study the newspaper and magazine advertisements. Who is being preached at about appearance, dress, shoes, hats? Be prosperous, they shout. Look it even if you are not. And get the answer in that unfailing place—in the employment seeker's groups. Look at the girls and look at the boys. Were employers as puritanical as they used to be they would wonder why such gorgeously dressed girls need to work.

Trying to trace this spending phenomenon is impossible. One cannot discover where the money goes. The nice thing about it is that it keeps going. And despite all the high-powered spending the aggregate national savings seem to rise. It is a case of spending money and having it, too. Since one cannot spend and have it is safer to say that one cannot get without spending. The man spending ten dollars or a thousand decreases his monetary possession by that sum, but most likely he gets it back in wages, earnings, dividends or other channels.

If the job doesn't suit she breezes out

The farmers in some sections are reported as not prosperous. The tiller of the soil is not the only one without much money or with a mortgage. But isn't he better off than a dozen years ago? Are certain of their homes as unsanitary, cheerless, bare? Do they still have to wait for the occasional medicine show for their amusement? Are they movieless, diamondless, carless, radioless, machineryless? Don't their womenfolk demand these things —and get them?

The new woman is not only a fast and furious spender, but also a saver. Women figure highly in savings statistics, nor is that all. Woman, as a new economic power, has released hundreds of millions of dollars in the investment field—all of them wealth-producing dollars. Women outrank men as stockholders in many of the largest of the American corporations. The proportion is astounding.

The United States Steel Corporation has reported an increase of more than twenty-five per cent in ten years, and it has about fifty-four thousand women stockholders. The Eastman Kodak Company is about equally held by men and women. About six thousand women hold stock in the E. I. DuPont De Nemours Corporation. The National Biscuit Company report one year showed as many. The General Electric Company has for years numbered more women than men as holders of its shares. The American Telephone and Telegraph Company reported once fifteen per cent more women than men. Other corporations in which women outnumber men are Westinghouse Airbrake Company, American Sugar Company, Pennsylvania Railroad, Pullman Company, and many others.

To what an extent the semi-political prejudice against corporations has vanished through the wider participation of women in business and industry is problematical, but I consider them the most noteworthy factor against the soap-box orator. The street corner demagogue can draw together a hundred men, but he couldn't corral ten women if his life depended on it.

A Senator's speech against a corporation won't mean anything to a woman who has had the thrill of cashing in on a point's rise in even one share of stock, or the woman who twice a year cuts a coupon worth at least thirty-seven and one-half cents. As the old burlesque joke has it, telephone, tele-

graph and tell-a-woman are the fastest means of communication, and these simple thrills are miraculous in making of woman a prosperity booster.

If a man in a workroom of men has profited by a stock rise his co-worker most likely will dismiss it with a "lucky dog" comment, but not so among women. If Mary Jane makes a dollar in a similar transaction her companions will gossip enough to impress themselves by it. Nor are only the high-paid workers concerned. One may see women of the average employee type scanning the stock market page; not as many as read the tabloid newspaper, to be sure, but still a gratifying number.

All this led to a situation to which man had to cater. Business, banking, and industry have come down from their high horse and are frankly dedicating their appeals to women. Nine-tenths of all American advertising today is one grand broadside against women's pocketbooks—with nice results. Advertising would not pay on its present scale if men only were concerned. Nowadays unless men move quickly, they will find the market preempted by women. There is no longer a ground floor for them. Most large stores reserve the ground floor for the women, for quick turnovers, and big scale sales.

Even our modern literature, intended for quick consumption, is not unrelated to the situation of feminine predominance. Whether it be the dynamic woman, out for herself, or the one who transforms a male mollusk into a captain of industry, both make for their self-confidence. They know what they want.

IV

How does a young lady in need of a job go after it? She breezes in, her freshest frock on, ten cents well paid for the lipstick, stockings fit to kill, and if wages and conditions do not suit she breezes out again. This is true of the great majority, so employers have not much choice. This independence has served to raise women's pay and standardize it. Office men have no such value.

Witness the silent duel between the woman within and the man without. By that I mean the secretary or clerk of a man who has a job for the caller. The latter cringes beneath her appraising glance, which often gleams cynically, "You'll never do!" Frequently such a woman does the weeding, nor does she like it very much if he makes a hit with the boss.

These women buffers, between employer and employee, between buyer and seller, soon learn a great deal about business. They begin to learn what's what in industry. They begin to invest in the company. As soon as this fractional proprietary interest is established the process of elimination becomes highly refined. A woman is always supercilious, whether she means it or not, toward the man who can never exceed her own earning capacity, even though her best beau is no better off.

On the whole, it seems as if the bulk of our working womanhood earns more than the corresponding bulk of working manhood. The latter, however, as already indicated, has more demands upon his pay than the woman. This perhaps accounts for the thousands of women who go to theaters, lectures, or other amusement by themselves, and while so few men make the same pastimes a regular event. The boys cannot afford it.

But this view somehow leads nowhere. These fellows always have the price of a "pint." Tailors and shoemen never did a bigger business, and two dollars' service at one sitting in a barber shop is no uncommon occurrence. Sheikism has been in its glory for years now, without sign of abating. When these chaps want to dance they never lack companions. When they want to pet, the other cheek is always there. There is no pavement in the United States pounded by the feet of

a poetic but penniless youth in lonesomeness. So, it will be seen, there is not much real need of pity for these men.

In my meanderings I have met many women at the door of more or less celebrated sanctums. One, in the office of a well-known bank president, with her desk not five feet away from his, was as timid as a mouse. Another, in a building a few blocks away, deserves the title of a female Cerberus. Acting for the columns of the press I have encountered many of these office women in evening time, in play hours. All I can say is that the woman at work and the woman at play are two different selves in one body, if their behavior, attitude, expression, and choice of companions, are taken as a criterion.

It was not at all evident that their male escorts might exceed their respective earnings as business women. Yet in some way, indefinable and elusive, these women must instill among those close to them some of the viewpoints which they have more or less unconsciously absorbed in the nearness of their rich employers. They must carry some of this sentiment and outlook into the more modest world they call home, and so is it any wonder that that means spending money, arraying themselves every day as Cleopatra possibly arrayed herself only once, and thinking nothing of it?

No wonder it costs men money to go out these days. And the best part of it is that the men like it. Causing a man to like the sensation of spending his money has been a good thing for the country, and the women have done it. They have had to—because they spend all their own.

ANOTHER DAY

ANOTHER day, with all its woven wonder;
The dusk of shifting shadows on far slopes,
With now and then the cloud-rack rent asunder,
And gleams of sun like golden harvest hopes.

Another day, and down the mountain valleys
Winds that like virile banded buglers blow,
And racing streams that shout with rhythmic sallies
Their clear cool reminiscences of snow.

Another day, upon whose breast are blended
Hues that no earthly imperfection mars;
Another day, whose dying hours are ended
With the sublime processional of stars.

And you and I, love, though apart we stray,
Nearer and dearer by another day!

Clinton Scollard

His Word

The reason why a very strange decoration stands beside a grave in the cemetery on Berthoud's Cove

By Meigs O. Frost

When I let him fall to the deck he was dead

ALCIBIADE PERRIN, sheriff of the parish of Barataria, methodically moored to a dead cypress on the bayou bank the little gasoline cruiser that was the official steed he rode over his wide and watery domain in southern Louisiana. The chug of its motor carried far—so far that it would reach the ears of the killer whom he was seeking long before the boat itself came into sight down the winding reaches of the still, black bayou.

"Lend a hand, Jules," he said to Jules Subra, his deputy.

Together they put overside one of those slender, pointed pirogues in which—so he will boast—a Cajun can slip silently across a saucerful of water. Carefully, with the balance that is the instinctive gift of the Louisiana bayou folk, they stepped aboard, squatted in bow and stern, and took up their paddles.

Four miles down the bayou lay the spot they sought—a tiny cemetery. As they paddled along, with never a splash to make more sound than a swimming muskrat, Jules Subra spoke softly.

"Sho' is wan bad man, dat Achille Maurepas! Can't figgeh why he keel dat nawthe'n Yankee fellah lak he was

a dawg, right on Cap'n Didier Dantin's boat. Always I know dat Achille, he is ha'dheaded; but I don't t'ink, me, he is dat kin' of fellah what's goin' choke a man daid with hees bare han's. Kin' of lucky fo' us dat Raoul Brulatour fellah, he tip you he see Achille in town and find he start fo' dat Berthoud's Cove cemetery to-day."

"Uh-huh, Jules," grunted Alcibiade.

Conversation did not fit into the sheriff's scheme of things just then. He wanted to think.

Raoul Brulatour had never been a friend of his. There had been something he did not understand in the expression of the man's face when Brulatour gave him that tip — something malignant and ratlike; but the man was malignant and ratlike, the sheriff reflected. He was a cheap, tin horn gambler who ran cheap, tin horn games surreptitiously in various shacks under the levee. It was his game to get boys involved in crooked games, and then to lend them money at usurious interest, keeping them long in his debt, like any loan shark. He had left black and bitter marks on many young lives, but it was hard to get definite evidence against him.

The muscles of Sheriff Alcibiade's lean jaw and throat tightened in memory. That was the way his own son had started the wild fling that ended only when he disappeared.

Jules Subra was talking softly again.

"Wondeh what-all dat Achille man wants to go fo' a cemetery, anyway!"

"Dunno, Jules," replied the sheriff. "Better we don't talk no more just now, Jules," he added, a minute later. "Just follow me and do what I say."

Lord, Sheriff Alcibiade meditated, how he wished he had been near by when Achille had killed that man! There was so much he could have learned had he been on the spot; but he had been more than a hundred miles away, among the remote settlements in the far southwestern corner of his parish, patiently explaining to indignant Cajun trappers why they must not run their trap lines over miles of prairie—the wet *terre tremblante*—recently bought by lumber corporations.

The natives could not understand why the new owners should charge heavy fees to trappers who tried to trap free where their forefathers had trapped free for generations. The sheriff had smoothed out that tense situation with never a weapon drawn, though murder had threatened; but when he returned, it was to find Achille's unidentified victim buried far down the bayou, and Achille vanished. A stumble-footed, muddle-headed deputy had made a mess of it.

Alcibiade's keen old eyes, faded blue, looked out over the bow of the pirogue. Ahead loomed a low point of land, from which three live oaks thrust up against the sky—trees venerable with their long beards of Spanish moss that were neither gray nor green nor silver, but a curious blend of all three hues. In the cove around that point, climbing the sides of a great shell mound left by some tribe of Indians long extinct, thickly walled in by trees and underbrush, lay the little clearing where for generations the bayou folk had laid their dead to rest.

Silently the pirogue nosed through the reeds to the oozy bank. Silently Sheriff Alcibiade and Jules Subra stepped ashore. Silently they hid their pirogue amid a mess of greenery. Silently they threaded their way through the undergrowth and reconnoitered.

The clearing was empty—empty of all save the little whitewashed wooden crosses at the heads of graves heaped with white shell, and the little whitewashed wooden boxes, peak-roofed, glass-fronted, beneath the crosses—boxes that held gay wax flowers and wreaths of bright beads.

They settled down to wait. The sheriff showed no weapons. Jules sat nervously, with a rifle across his knees

and a heavy revolver sagging at his hip. A whimsical smile deepened the creases on Alcibiade's face. Jules sure did love to tote around more hardware than one of these gun-fighting sheriffs you saw in the movies!

Then every muscle tautened. A step crunched on shells where the little cemetery sloped to the water's edge. The two men peered through the leafy screen that hid them. Achille's pirogue had been as silent as theirs.

Up a narrow pathway between the graves he walked warily. In his arms was a strange burden. He stopped, bent down, and deposited it by a little heap of fresh white shell not even marked with a cross.

It was Jules Subra whose twittering nerves broke the silence.

"Hands up, Achille!" he cried sharply, as he stepped from behind the curtain of leaves, his rifle aimed.

Achille Maurepas wheeled. His hands, instead of rising, had started a swift swoop to the waistband of his trousers, where a pistol butt snuggled; but they stopped, frozen, at a well-known voice. The voice wasn't even addressing him. Sheriff Alcibiade was speaking to his deputy.

"Drop that gun, Jules!" he ordered, stepping into sight in the same split second in which Jules had lunged forward. "Leave yo' gun, Achille. Nobody's goin' to do any shootin' 'roun' heah. Achille, I want to sit down and talk to you awhile."

There was that in his voice which made dissent impossible — something besides authority.

On a fallen cypress log at the edge of the clearing they sat. Cigarettes of the black bayou "string tobacco" were rolled and lighted. Acrid smoke spiraled skyward.

II

It was Sheriff Alcibiade who spoke first.

"Been a long time since I saw you, Achille," came the easy, drawling argot of the bayous. "Done knowed you and your folks long time, even if I don' get up Mauvais Bois way more'n once every five yeahs or so. S'posin' you tell me all about it, Achille. How come you kill that man?"

Then the sheriff slipped into the swift French of southern Louisiana, in which both he and Achille thought instinctively.

"I know that thou art a hard man, Achille, but just, always; and though thou hast fought, never hast thou killed before. Was there good reason? Who was that veiled young woman with the child? And where are they?"

It was a story new and bitter and freighted with life and death to himself that Achille told; yet a story enacted in this world so often that it is worn threadbare. He told of his daughter, young and beautiful beyond the beauty of most in those tiny, far-scattered settlements of the Louisiana coast; of her books and her studies; of her fight to get away from the isolation of the cabin beneath the live oak and chinaberry trees on the far *chenière* of Mauvais Bois. Achille had not the money to send her to school; but from shrimp trawl and oyster dredge and trap line had come the money to buy the books with which she had worked, helped from month to month when Father Girault stopped at Mauvais Bois in his little mission boat, the St. Rita. And at last she had won free—even to a position in a great department store in New Orleans.

"I give thee my word, Alcibiade, that girl she can go to the moving pictures every night in the week, like a man of millions!"

Yet that, even that, had not been enough. She had studied in the night classes of a college of business. She had risen to a better position, with pay undreamed of in the bayou country—fifty dollars a week, *voyons! Incroyable!* She had become a private secretary. Little Armaid Maurepas of

Mauvais Bois a private secretary in the greatest city of the South!

Then she had met the man. Who? Let it pass. She had thought him a man of business, who traveled the Mississippi Valley selling goods. His money was plentiful. Chicago was his headquarters, he had told her, though he knew Louisiana and spoke the French of the bayous as if born to that speech. He had urged hasty marriage.

"Thou knowest something of the heart of a girl in love, Alcibiade—soft wax! She did as he wished."

Then, even on her honeymoon trip up the valley, she had learned the truth. He was a gambler, an agent of rum runners — even worse, unbelievably worse. She had written that news to Achille less than a week after the letter in which she told of her marriage. The mail boat came to Mauvais Bois only once or twice a month, and both letters reached him together.

"But we were told your daughter was dead, Achille."

"I know. It was I who put it forth."

Achille Maurepas was silent for a moment. Then again the swift French of the bayous took up the tale.

Four years later another letter came. Armaid was coming home with her baby. Her husband? The beast unspeakable had sought to make of Armaid a woman of the streets, to support him, as other women had given for his support.

"*Tu comprends, Alcibiade, vieux ami?*"

Sheriff Alcibiade's jaw clamped angrily. Yes, he understood.

"She writes to me that she is coming home," the swift French rippled on. "She would arrive at Mauvais Bois on the Héloise with Cap'n Didier Dantin; but the letter comes to Mauvais Bois only the day before she is to reach New Orleans. All the night I drive my gazzoline up the bayou to meet her. I would not have her think she is unwelcome, *cette pauvre petite* Armaid. Halfway up Bayou Barataria, the engine goes dead. Hours I fight it, and at last it runs. I am too late to meet her in New Orleans; but down the bayou comes the Héloise."

He had hailed the little old stern-wheel bayou packet, and Captain Dantin had slowed down while Achille ran alongside, moored his "gazzoline" to a bitt, and clambered aboard. There, aft on the lower deck, veiled, sat Armaid, her baby beside her, a huddle of misery. She had spoken to him, and asked for shelter.

Shelter! His arms had gone about her. Into them, a moment later, he had taken the little granddaughter; and while Armaid told him all her sad story—told it swiftly, as one who fears interruption—the baby, uncomprehending, had put her little arms about his neck and kissed his leathery old face.

"Thou shouldst have seen her, Alcibiade! Eyes of such brightness, and cheeks as red as the *crête du coq* that grows on Mauvais Bois in summer; Alcibiade, it was the flush of sickness; but I did not know it then. We talked, *cette petite gran'fille* and I. She asked of me a gift, and I promised it to her. Armaid sat there, tears running down her face."

Then, Achille went on, a voice sounded in their ears—a voice at which Armaid shrank and shuddered. It was the voice of her husband.

"Understand, Alcibiade? He had seen her leave their rooms, and had followed. On the train, all the way down the valley, he had taunted her. Me take her back? He would tell me, he boasted to her, that which would make me throw her out into the nearest gutter. Poor child, she believed him; but she came. He had been up forward on the Héloise when I came aboard. She had feared to tell me, for he carried a pistol, and he had used it before in the city. When he came aft, he found us together; and he talked. Alcibiade, it was not talk for any girl to hear. I leaped at him. He drew

his pistol. I tore it from his hand and threw it into the bayou. By the throat I took him."

Gnarled, knotted, hard old hands were raised in air, clenched tight.

"*Le bon Dieu* be praised, Alcibiade, I am yet strong. I saw his face turn black. When I let him fall to the deck he was dead. Two of the crew, negroes, saw me. They feared to move. One saw who knew me—Raoul Brulatour. Him I threatened with death if he spoke. I did not worry about Cap'n Didier Dantin. He is my friend. Into my boat I took Armaid and her baby. That boat of mine goes two miles to one for the Héloise. To Mauvais Bois I took them."

"They are there now?" Sheriff Alcibiade's voice was husky.

"Armaid is there, Alcibiade. The little one is here. She was more sick than we knew, and in two days she died. I made the coffin. By night I brought her here in my boat, to bury her beside my people. Then, yesterday morning, I went to town. I keep my promise."

"Your promise?"

"She had asked for a doll," Achille said simply. "I had promised her a doll with hair of gold, and eyes of blue, and a dress blue as her eyes."

"But the little one is dead, Achille." Sheriff Alcibiade's voice, gentle, held puzzlement.

"I know; but I gave my word."

Silently Achille bent down. The hands that had held a man's throat until he died now with incredible gentleness loosened a knotted cord, and paper wrappings fell away. There, before their eyes, was a plain box of wood, painted white, with a peaked roof and a glass front. In it was a doll with hair of gold, and eyes of blue, and a dress blue as her eyes.

Achille placed the box by the head of the little grave of heaped white shell. He knelt beside the grave, his lips moving, his voice faintly audible, his face twisted with pain.

"Mother of God, pray for her!"

A gesture from Sheriff Alcibiade as he, too, knelt silently sent Jules Subra to his knees. Moment after moment they knelt there, the only sound the voice of Achille in a prayer as old as his faith itself.

At last Achille scrambled awkwardly to his feet.

"It is not that I want to hurt thee, old friend," he said, again in their native French; "but since thou dost not understand it seems to me that I must tell thee that which must be known in court. No man could blame thee for bringing me back, even if thou were not the sheriff of Barataria. The man I slew, Alcibiade—he was thy son. A bad son, from so good a father! And now take me with you back to the jail, Alcibiade. I am ready."

The sheriff of Barataria looked around him with misty eyes. He looked everywhere but at the spot where stood Achille Maurepas. So this was what had been behind the ratlike eyes of Raoul Brulatour!

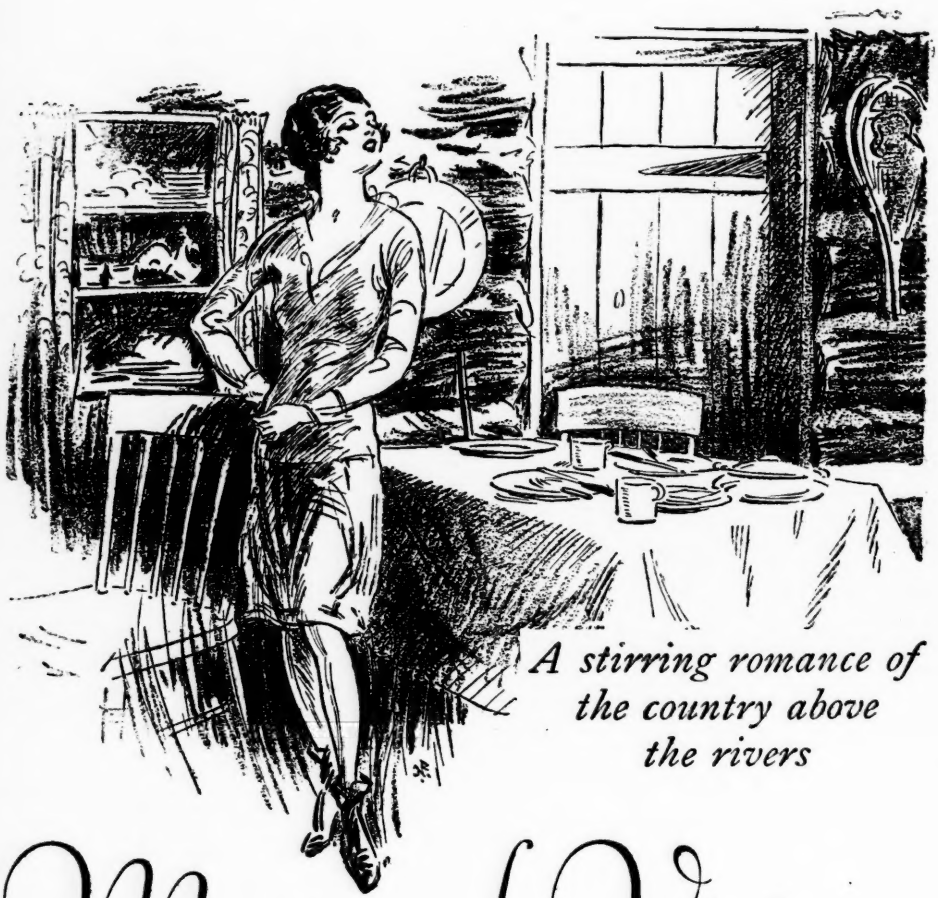
Then the sheriff spoke, direct to Jules Subra. He spoke slowly, in the labored English of bayou land.

"Jules, I think that Raoul Brulatour fellah is just a plain liar," he said. "Me, I don't think we can find Achille Maurepas anywhere. I thing Achille Maurepas done gone down in the Beeg Swamp, where nobody goin' to fin' him. After a while folks is goin' to forget, like they always do. That boy who is dead—I think maybe he is better dead, me. What you think, Jules?"

"*Sacré tonnerre de Dieu,* me, I theenk yo' right," replied Jules Subra.

Silently, in turn, they gripped the hand of the man whom they could not find. Silently they departed through the underbrush for their pirogue.

Silently, at the head of a little grave of heaped white shell, in a glass-fronted box of wood, a doll with hair of gold, and eyes of blue, and a dress blue as her eyes, stood guard.



A stirring romance of the country above the rivers

Master of Visions

By William Merriam Rouse

IN the bush it had been reported that M. Donat Dubord, the rich notary of St. Félicien, desired to buy two or three silver-gray fox pelts to trim a coat of fine cloth for his daughter, Susette. There were wood choppers who wished they had the pelts to sell, there were trappers and hunters who hoped to have them, and there was also Norbert Perodeau.

Young Perodeau, who laughed as easily as he swung one snowshoe over the other, got the pelts. One he already had, one he bought from an old *bûcheron* whose business was with the ax rather than the rifle, and for the third he hunted until he found a silver-gray.

Thus it was that on a day not long before Christmas a good-looking young man entered the one street of St. Félicien — which is far north in Canada, toward the country above the rivers—and began to look about for a

"Wash those dishes!" thundered Norbert, whose smile was gone

Complete novelette

shop where he could ask the way to the house of M. Donat Dubord, and perhaps also buy a bottle of *vin gingembre*. Perodeau had not smelled the air of a village since the first snows, which come about St. Catherine's Day; and while he was not out of love with the bush, he was ready to enjoy an hour or two where there would be a few pretty girls to look at.

There were some stone houses in St. Félicien, as in the old parishes, and their whitewashed walls seemed to Perodeau as neat as the snowdrifts which in places rose to the eaves. He took to his heart this village with bright curtains at the windows, and smoke coming from broad chimneys.

Without doubt, he thought, all the girls of St. Félicien had blue eyes and black hair and pink cheeks. This notary would be a kindly old man, willing to give a fair price, and it was even possible that his daughter might invite a young woodsman to dinner. Perodeau was ready to laugh with the first man or woman who spoke to him.

The first whom Norbert Perodeau met, however, was not a man to laugh with. Norbert saw him coming, and halted, with the touch of pity upon his heart at sight of the poor fellow's ragged jacket and patched mittens. If it could be done without offense, he resolved to give the shabby-looking stranger a dollar. Certainly this man

must be an honest and hard-working laborer whom *le bon Dieu* had blessed with a great number of children.

Perodeau held up his hand, with a smile; but then he received a chill which was not from the cold of the air. It was a matter of thirty degrees below zero, and a day to make one have regard for the nose and ears, but to Perodeau the pale sunlight had been wine-warm until he looked into the stranger's eyes.

They were of the color of cold gray marble, but there was meaning in them. Norbert thought instantly of a panther, crouched belly to the ground and ready to spring. He had looked into the eyes of certain men in the bush who were better left alone; and he would have said that this was one of them, except that he stood in St. Félicien, where there was law, where there were a notary and a mayor.

"*Bonjour, monsieur!*" said Norbert. bert.

The stranger stopped, because he could not well do otherwise without taking pains to go around Perodeau; but he made no reply beyond a slight movement of the head.

"Will you be so good," continued Perodeau, "as to tell me which is the house of M. Donat Dubord, the notary?"

A peculiar gleam came into the eyes of the stranger, and for a very small part of a second he hesitated before he replied. Then he pointed with one of those patched mittens in the direction in which he himself had been going.

"*Voilà, mon vieux*—the big house with the three chimneys. Are you not able to pick out the house of a rich notary at a glance?"

The man stepped aside with a catlike movement and went on, with the thanks of Norbert fading upon the air behind him. He had no desire to talk. This was truly a strange fellow!

Perodeau shrugged, turned, and retraced his steps. To his surprise the man with whom he had just spoken left the roadway at the Dubord house and went around to the rear.

"Ah!" thought Norbert. "This explains it—he works for M. Dubord!"

Perodeau walked up to the front door and pulled the bell handle. He had his rifle, naturally, and the pelts were rolled up in the pack that was strapped to his back with his snowshoes. He stood very straight, with his head up and the unquenchable smile returning to his blue eyes. A tall *casque* of mink was cocked jauntily to one side on his head, and the jacket that he wore had been made from the thick blankets of the Hudson's Bay company. Pure white it was, with broad stripes of blue around the bottom and the sleeves.

It was not to be wondered at that the little servant who opened the door stared and twinkled with appreciation of such a gift of heaven upon the doorstep.

"Light of my life," said Norbert gayly, "will you speak to M. Dubord and tell him that one has come from the country above the rivers with the three silver-gray fox pelts which he desires?"

"You must go to the back door, *monsieur*," said the girl, with a flush. "I am sorry, but M. Dubord is very particular."

"I will go to any door that you will open for me!" laughed Perodeau tolerantly.

Going along the hard-packed path to the rear of the house, he knocked, and the same girl let him in; but now her face was crimson, and tears were near to overflowing from her black eyes.

"Ha!" exclaimed Norbert, as he stepped over the threshold. "A smile at the front door—a tear at the back! This is December, not April!"

"You'll find it winter here," replied the girl, and she vanished as Perodeau looked about him.

A stout, middle-aged woman was busy at a shining cook stove, which had

been set into the fireplace of other times. At one side of the room stood the ragged fellow of the road. His cap was off now, and he was even less good to the eye. Straight, coarse hair of blue-black straggled over his forehead, and the brows above his cold eyes were a single line.

At the sound of an opening door they both turned. A thin old man, of no more than medium height, entered and looked at them through eyeglasses which were continually slipping a little on his nose. He was very carefully dressed, this old man, in clothes which must have come from Quebec, or even Montreal; and the ring upon his finger was a ruby, worth as much as a trapper could make in a good year.

"What is it that you want?" he asked, directing his glasses at the man of the cold eyes.

"Charity, in the name of Heaven!" the man exclaimed, becoming suddenly alive. He took a step forward, with extended hand. His voice trembled. "I am *bûcheron,* me, but I have not been able to work for a long time. I have had a misery in my leg. My woman, she has been sick, also, and our children, they starve. It is near to Christmas, *monsieur*—help me!"

There was a little interval of silence, while M. Dubord studied the man. He shrugged, with a gesture.

"But why have you come to me?"

"Does not all the world know the great M. Dubord, the notary, and how he has been prospered?"

"*Eh, bien!*" grunted the notary. "It goes like that! Sit down there at the table. Give him something to eat, Mariette. As for the rest, I will call my daughter shortly. She attends to these matters."

Turning to Norbert, M. Dubord looked over his glasses and then through them.

"Now!" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

"To sell you three silver fox pelts of the greatest magnificence," replied Perodeau instantly, and he swung his pack down from his shoulders. "They are worthy of your attention, *monsieur le notaire.* There is nothing to equal them between Hudson Strait and the St. Lawrence!"

"That, also, is an affair for my daughter," said Dubord, not at all moved. "If they please her, and do not cost too much, I will buy. Wait here!"

The notary went from the room, and then slowly the glances of the two other men met. There was something hidden behind the marble eyes of that fellow at the table. Perodeau had seen many wood choppers in bad luck. They were usually kindly, of no great intelligence, and with all that was in their minds to be read at a glance.

From this moment of speculation Norbert was recalled by a voice. It rang with the clear tone of a bell, but it was a bell coated by frost. It struck him with the feeling of bitter weather. He turned and gasped as a man does when he goes through the ice into a lake. A distant dream had taken shape in the kitchen of Donat Dubord.

From her little wrists and ankles to her great hazel eyes, wide and bright as the morning, Mlle. Susette Dubord was as nearly perfect as it is possible for woman to be—or, at least, so thought Norbert Perodeau at that first glance. Her skin was the milk-white and rose-red which is the gift of the north to its young women. Her hair was a rich dark crown with the color of old copper in it; but her beauty was so subdued and blended, and she was so slender, that she truly seemed more like a vision than one of the girls of the villages. Perodeau wanted to tell her all this.

"I asked," said the frosty voice, "which one was the beggar? Are you both without tongues?"

"I, *mademoiselle!*" cried Norbert. "I am a beggar for the privilege of laying at your feet some furs which I thought were worthy of you. *Hélas,*

there is nothing worthy of you!"

"Bah!" exclaimed Mlle. Dubord. "The same patter for maid and mistress! I heard you when you were at the front door, *imbécile!*"

This was one of the few times when Norbert Perodeau had been daunted. He had the grace to turn a little red.

"Was it not necessary to be polite to your servant, *mademoiselle?*" he asked. "Me, I am French!"

Neatly turned upon her, for she also was French, and she had not been polite to him. She was furious.

"Let me see your pelts, *habitant,*" she said. "I doubt that I want them."

She meant to insult him by that "*habitant,*" for one saw at a glance that Perodeau was no man to follow the plow, to milk cows, and to tend pigs. The cook flung an angry glance from the stove, betraying herself as an *habitant,* but the man at the table continued to eat with an expressionless face.

"I have not the honor to be of those good people who make it possible for the rich to eat," replied Norbert, as he opened his pack. "I am a woodsman from the country above the rivers, where we use our fingers for forks and sleep with the panthers to keep warm."

"Insolent!" murmured *mademoiselle,* but her mind was too much taken with the beautiful pelts that he spread out before her to make a fitting answer. She ran her small fingers through the smooth fur. Her eyes sparkled, but her words said something quite different. "They are nothing wonderful, these pelts. How much do you want for them?"

If Norbert Perodeau had not been an unusual man, there would be nothing to record of him here. All the money he had he had paid for one of these fox skins; the other was his capital in reserve, and the third his good luck. His head went up. He made a wide gesture.

"*Mademoiselle,* I have had the joy of looking at you, and that is worth the hides of a thousand foxes. Take these three—they are yours!"

The singing of the kettle—the snapping of the fire—these were the only sounds in the Dubord kitchen for as long as a minute. The cook stared, open-mouthed; the stranger had stopped eating. Mlle. Dubord regarded Norbert with the look of one completely baffled.

"I do not know whether you are mad, impertinent, or merely a fool," she said at last. "To many a poor man this would be a little fortune, this heap of fur at my feet. Who are you?"

"Norbert Perodeau, *mademoiselle,* just now of the country above the rivers," he replied.

Never in his life had he been more serious; but he smiled as gayly as though his heart had not suddenly been bound with golden chains.

"But what are you?" she persisted. "A mere *bûcheron* does not give away three silver fox skins! Nor speak such good French!"

"I am a master of visions!" answered Norbert solemnly. "I had a vision of a man who was brother of the snows and of the forest; so I left a town and became that vision. Now I see another!"

"You are a remarkable man, and a bold one," said Susette Dubord slowly. Then quickly she shook herself free of whatever thoughts were holding her. "But you forget yourself! Leave the pelts and come to-morrow. If I buy them, my father will pay you what they are worth."

It was dismissal. Norbert thought he saw the faint flicker of a smile pass over the face of the man at the table, and he felt that he must carry a repulse as lightly as a victory.

"I will come, but not for money," said Perodeau, as he turned to the door. "*Au revoir, mademoiselle!*"

II

In the snow-filled street, with his rifle under his arm, Perodeau was not

sure just what he wanted to do. Should he go back to his *cabane*, or find a place to stay for the night in St. Félicien?

The first thing he desired, it seemed, was to be alone, so that he could think about this girl such as never was before. There might have been one like her among the great ladies of the *ancien régime*—perhaps; but Norbert doubted it.

While he stood there with his nose pointed one way and his thought another, the man who had just eaten the bread of Donat Dubord brushed past without a word or a look. The fellow carried a bundle of clothing under his arm, and a basket which looked as if it might contain food. He walked swiftly, and was out of sight in a minute or two.

"Now that," muttered Perodeau to himself, "is a very strange beggar. If I did not see the end of a silk handkerchief hanging out of his pocket, then my eyes are playing tricks on me!"

Norbert rubbed his chin. He took a quick resolution and set off after the beggar. It was done wholly on impulse, but he had an extremely unpleasant and uneasy feeling about this man who said he was a poor *bûcheron* with starving children, and who carried a silk handkerchief. Perodeau had seen him somewhere before, and the memory was vaguely disturbing.

At first Norbert went slowly, so that the stranger would enter the bush well ahead of him. He must not be suspected of following. The highway skirted the edge of the bush, and a wood road turned off near the village. Here Perodeau stopped. A pair of snowshoes had been set up on end there recently. He found the little square holes where the ends had been stuck into the snow beside a tree, and there were tracks showing that a man had waded waist deep from the road. Some one had left his snowshoes there while he went on to St. Félicien.

There was also an irregular depression in the snow, as if something had fallen and buried itself. Norbert floundered to the spot and dug. His mittened hands soon struck a solid object, and he brought up the basket that the beggar had taken from M. Dubord's house. It was packed with bread, pork, corn meal, sugar, tea; and a little more pawing revealed the bundle of clothing.

"It was not for help that he went to the house of Donat Dubord!" growled Norbert. "The fellow is a liar, and I have done well to follow him!"

From there Perodeau traveled rapidly, watching for fresh snowshoe tracks at the side of the road. At the end of half an hour he found them, going both ways. They had been made by long snowshoes, built for speed. A chopper or a trapper would have worn a shorter shoe with a coarser mesh.

Norbert put on his own and followed the trail. It led north and west, deep into the bush.

It was not long before he picked up his man. He saw the pretended beggar following the course of a snow-covered brook, marching easily, unhampered by a pack, and with a rifle under his arm. Judging from that, his camp must be within a day's journey of St. Félicien, and Perodeau determined to see it. The stare of those marble-hard eyes haunted him, but not yet could he connect it with anything in the past.

The snow was of a depth that covered most of the underbrush, and the two men marched swiftly, Norbert being careful to keep too far enough behind to be discovered. Mid afternoon came and passed, blue shadows stretched themselves out on the snow, and night was at hand when the beggar at last halted on the edge of a cliff. Neither pursued nor pursuer had stopped to eat or smoke during the day.

Norbert, from behind a big hemlock, saw the man ahead swing his rifle, as if in answer to a greeting, and then dis-

appear over the edge of the cliff. Instantly the pursuer began to work forward from tree to tree toward that spot. He approached the cliff crouching, with his rifle ready, and looked down from the shelter of a tree trunk.

He was gazing into a little cuplike valley, so deep that the smoke from a fire there was dissipated in the air before it rose above the level of the surrounding cliffs. In the valley there was a camp—not a permanent log *cabane,* but a small shelter of boughs and blankets laid over poles. The beggar was talking to two men who had left the fire to meet him. The murmur of their voices came up to Perodeau, and he could see that these others were better clothed than the man he had followed.

The conference went on—interminably, it seemed. Norbert was beginning to wonder what he should do next when the two men of the camp parted from the newcomer with a burst of laughter and started for a path that zigzagged up the face of the cliff.

If it had not been for the gray dusk, Perodeau's trail would surely have been discovered, but in the dimness of the bush the two did not notice the tracks of snowshoes other than those of the one who had just come to them. A patter of talk drifted to Norbert, hiding not fifty feet from them.

"*Sacré!*" exclaimed one of the men. "This is the best thing that Chauret has ever planned!"

"And the most dangerous!"

"He'll handle it. Chauret le Chat will dip into the cream without getting his whiskers wet. Whoever named him the Cat did well!"

"He has claws, too. I know of two or three men who found it out. They're under the snow now!"

"I would not cross him for twice my share of this—"

Here the voices died away.

Norbert Perodeau remained motionless behind his tree. Now he knew why there was something about this pretended beggar which haunted his memory. Now he knew the secret of those cold and mottled eyes. Many a cache of furs had been robbed by Chauret le Chat, and more than one chopper had had his winter's wages taken from him. The Cat was known in the country above the rivers, and his name had gone south even as far as the St. Lawrence.

Perodeau remembered that he had seen the man once, in a camp far to the east. There had been a card game, with a knife fight at the end of it. He recalled Chauret's silent ferocity, and how he had left two men upon the floor and gone away with most of the money. On that occasion Le Chat had worn the finest of clothing. If it had not been for the rags and patches, Norbert would have recognized him in St. Félicien.

Obviously there was some design against the house of Donat Dubord. Perodeau looked down into the darkness of the valley, with the fire flashing like a jewel in the middle of it. He stared into the bush, where Chauret's two henchmen had disappeared. He had marched all day without eating, and there was nothing in his pack. He was willing to march all night; but it seemed that he could learn more from the leader than from any one else.

"If I can master visions, I should be able to master nightmares, such as this promises to be," he thought, with a grim smile at himself, "and cats!"

III

PERODEAU took the path down the cliff, and scrambled and slid into the light of the fire by which Chauret le Chat was frying pork. The Cat was on his feet long before the visitor arrived, and the muzzle of his rifle pointed at Norbert's stomach.

"Put up your gun," said Perodeau. "I made noise enough for a moose, but I'm as harmless as a deer!"

Chauret peered at his visitor and grunted. He sat down on a mass of

hemlock boughs, but he kept the rifle across his knees.

"You're the fool who gave away three silver foxes to-day," he said. "What are you doing here?"

"My *cabane* is only an hour's march from your camp," replied Norbert truthfully. "I saw your fire, and I'm hungry!"

It would have been contrary to the custom of the bush if the Cat had not asked him to eat. With a movement of the hand Chauret indicated the loaf, the knife, and the pot of tea. Perodeau laid a piece of pork between thick slices of bread, and was silent for several minutes while his teeth were well occupied.

"You will go on home to-night, naturally?" asked Chauret, at length.

"Ah, yes!"

Chauret le Chat grunted again. It was apparent that he did not desire company, and that no information was to be had from him as a gift. Perodeau was seized by one of the swift impulses which so often took possession of him. He drank a cup of scalding tea, wiped his hands, and rose.

"Thank you, *monsieur*," he said. "I trust the fortune you deserve will come to you."

"It will," replied Chauret. "You'll find it easier climbing at the other side of the valley, if you go that way."

Norbert stepped around the fire, as if to leave. Then, with all the quickness of which he was capable, he bent down, seized Chauret's rifle, and laid the stock over his host's thick woolen tuque.

The robber toppled to one side upon the boughs. His hand had grasped his rifle even as he lost consciousness. The Cat did not belie his name.

Perodeau took the rifle and emptied the magazine before he tossed it under the shelter. He found Chauret's knife, and threw it after the rifle. Then he put a few sticks of dry wood on the fire and sat down to wait.

In a matter of five minutes Chauret stirred, lifted his head with a blank stare, and finally sat up. Instinctively his hand went searching for his rifle, and then for his knife.

"We can talk better if you forget the rifle and the knife," suggested Norbert, with a smile.

"I have no more money than I had this morning," said Chauret sulkily. "I thought then that you looked like a thief. No honest man can give away three silver fox pelts!"

"It won't do you any good to play the poor *bûcheron* with me," Perodeau told him. "You are Chauret le Chat."

"Truly!" sneered Le Chat. "Why didn't you take me this morning in St. Félicien? They say there's a reward —enough to make a man rich!"

"I didn't know you this morning," replied Perodeau, "and I don't want blood money, my friend."

"Then what do you want? You hit me over the head—and don't want money?"

"I want to know why you went to the house of M. Donat Dubord. It was not for the food and clothing that you threw away. I want to know why your two men have gone down to St. Félicien to-night. You are going to tell me; and a lie will be very much worse for you than the truth, whatever that may be."

For a time Chauret studied the other man in silence. Slowly he drew a magnificent watch from his pocket and looked at it in the light of the fire.

"I'd very much like to put a knife between your ribs," he said, with a sincerity which almost choked him; "but I have an affair on hand to-night. How much will you take to leave me and go about your business?"

"There isn't money enough for that," replied Norbert. "I am waiting for you to answer my questions."

"And if I don't answer?"

"I shall keep you in a safe place until you do."

"Suppose I tell you what you want to know—what then?"

"That depends upon the nature of the answers, Chauret. I heard something from your men as they went past me at the top of the cliff, and it set me thinking."

It was clear that Chauret was debating whether or not he should tell the truth. He assumed, no doubt, that Perodeau had already learned part of his scheme.

"Tacite Lenoir and Black Bugeaud are fools," he said slowly. "I have warned them more than once that trees have ears as well as walls. *Alors,* if you have to have a share of this, I'll take it out of them. Have you any objection to spending some of the rich notary's money? A good time in Quebec, or even Montreal?"

"If M. Dubord should present me with his daughter and ten thousand dollars as a dowry," laughed Norbert, "then I might have no objection to spending some of the money!"

He had known that Chauret would take this as assent, or at least as evidence of an open mind; and the Cat did not disappoint him.

"*Bien!*" he exclaimed. "I'll make Bugeaud and Lenoir divide with you. In a word, we are going to make old Dubord pay exactly ten thousand for his daughter, if he wants to have her back again alive and well. I smelled out the game this morning—who is in the house at night, and how the rooms lie. I had a look at the girl and the old man. My men will take her tonight, possibly with the aid of a little chloroform. I don't like to let another man in on this, but I've got to be free, and I can use you."

Perodeau found it hard to sit there cross-legged while those two villains, no better and less intelligent than Chauret le Chat, were on their way to kidnap the girl who had taken possession of his heart that morning. His finger trembled on the trigger; but he could not shoot a defenseless man, and he could not indulge the folly of rushing off to St. Félicien. It might be too late when he got there. Then, if he missed Bugeaud and Lenoir in the bush, they would perhaps come back here and liberate Chauret. He could not leave his prisoner at present.

Le Chat was waiting for a reply. Perodeau rose slowly and brought the other man's snowshoes.

"Put them on," he said. "You are going home with me."

"*Sacré maudit!*" swore Chauret. "What do you want? You'll get no more than I've offered—a split with the others!"

"It's the girl I want. To-morrow I shall take her away from your men."

"You fool!" cried Chauret bitterly, and he fairly scorched the air with his opinion of Perodeau. "I'll kill you for this! If you cost us this money, it will be a slow death that you'll die!"

"No doubt, if you are able to do it," agreed Perodeau. "Get up! Put on your snowshoes! March! If you don't go fast enough, you'll get the point of my knife in your back!"

IV

A LITTLE later that night Chauret le Chat lay on a bunk in the comfortable *cabane* of Norbert Perodeau and watched his captor make ready to leave him. His hands and feet were tied. He was fastened to the bunk with the chains taken from half a dozen traps, and his chances of getting free were practically nothing.

"I regret that you can't read my few books," grinned Norbert, as he filled the stove with wood and closed the drafts. "I am desolated that you will not be able to smoke until I come back; but at least you are not on your way to Quebec to be hanged. Take comfort from that, *mon vieux!*"

"I shall certainly kill you for this!" repeated Chauret.

He had made the same promise a dozen times during their journey, and he had added details while Norbert was tying him. It had been necessary, in fact, to tap him over the head again in

order to accomplish the roping in a proper manner.

"Possibly you will kill me," admitted Perodeau. He blew out the candles. "Possibly Lenoir and Bugeaud will save you the trouble—who knows? *Bon soir,* Chauret!"

He went out, with a volley of curses ripping behind him. It was toward the end of a clear, starlit night; and it would be close to the first gray of morning by the time he reached the robbers' shelter in the valley. He had spent some time trying in vain to get further information from Chauret, and he had also eaten again.

If Bugeaud and Lenoir were successful, they might come back to the shelter with Susette Dubord, or they might have some other rendezvous with Chauret. If this were the case, it would be necessary to go on toward St. Félicien and try to pick up their trail out of the village.

Perodeau found the shelter deserted, with the empty rifle and the knife lying where he had flung them. This was good enough evidence that no one had been there. He built up the fire and waited while the stars faded and dawn climbed the sky. As soon as it was fully light he would go.

His heart was heavy. If the plans of the kidnapers had not gone wrong, Susette was somewhere in the bush with two men more dangerous than savages. She would be terrified, perhaps she would be cold and hungry. If any harm came to her, there would be annihilation for Bugeaud and Lenoir and Chauret le Chat—or Norbert Perodeau would die trying to bring it to them!

He was in the shelter, stretched out for a few minutes' rest, when a hail came faintly down from the cliff. He looked out carefully. It had grown light enough for him to see three figures there, and his heart leaped as he realized that one was a woman.

"Chauret! Wake up! We've got her!"

In reply Norbert reached forth his arm and shook his rifle. He wanted them to come down into camp before they found out that he was not Chauret, for if shooting started at long range he would be in great danger—and so would Susette, if he replied to their fire.

He watched the men as they scrambled down the cliff, with the girl between them. Again they called to him as they crossed to the shelter:

"Are you hurt, Chauret? What's the matter?"

When they were almost upon him, and so close that a man could not miss a shot, Perodeau leaped out and faced them. For seconds the men stood without word or movement. A low, half suppressed cry came from Susette. The three rifles were held ready for action.

Finally one of Chauret's men—a whiskered fellow who looked as if he might be Black Bugeaud — demanded hoarsely:

"Where's Chauret?"

"Keep still, *imbécile!*" snarled the other, a powerful chunk of a man with a quick eye. "We want to know who this fellow is, and why he's here."

Perodeau allowed himself to breathe again. He had a chance to talk, which was what he had wanted more than anything else. The rifles were two to one.

"I am Norbert Perodeau, *messieurs,*" he said, "and I am here to tell you that Chauret le Chat is my guest—in a certain place."

More of that thick and puzzled silence. Norbert had an instant in which to observe Susette Dubord. She was by no means overcome by her situation. The girl carried herself as if she were, by mistake, walking with a pack of mongrels. Beyond that first cry at sight of Perodeau she had shown no emotion, and if she was afraid she did not betray it. But for a look of weariness, natural after having marched a good part of the night, she was herself.

It was Susette who broke the silence, in a voice rich with scorn.

"So you are another of the same kind!" she said to Perodeau.

Before Norbert could reply, Bugeaud spoke again.

"Chauret told us nothing—"

"Will you never learn to hold your tongue?" barked Lenoir. He fixed Perodeau with a shrewd stare. "If Le Chat is your guest, he does not want to be—is it not so?"

"But yes," answered Norbert. He had a better plan than lying. "Le Chat was calling on the devil and all his angels for help when I left him."

"*Bien!*" exclaimed Lenoir. "So far we understand each other. And now what?"

"Do you want Chauret?" asked Perodeau.

"Naturally."

"Silence!" Lenoir spoke to Black Bugeaud as to an unruly dog. "I will do the thinking for us. If we can get along without Chauret, I shall feel very sorry for this fellow here. He will not live long; and he won't live much longer if Chauret is free. However, that is not the point. Can we do without Le Chat? I don't think so. Chauret is the man to deal with the notary. Moreover, we must have three men. The girl is a hellcat. Already she has bitten me and pulled out part of your whiskers!"

He stopped thinking aloud and regarded Norbert with a speculative glance. Susette sat down by the fire and stared moodily into it. Then Perodeau announced his terms.

"I will trade Chauret for *mademoiselle,*" he declared.

Susette looked up quickly. Tacite Lenoir threw back his head, and the morning rang loudly with his scornful laughter.

"You collect the ransom and we collect—Chauret!" he cried. "There's a fine profit in that for us!"

"I may not be clever," spoke up Bugeaud, who had not joined in the laughter, "but I think we'll have to trade that way. Le Chat has made himself known at Dubord's house as a harmless *bûcheron.* He was to discover the girl for old Dubord and make terms with us. Neither you nor I can go there. The notary saw us before I knocked him down; and—"

"Fool!" exclaimed Lenoir. "If this fellow has the girl, of what use is all that?"

"Maybe he'll need help before he gets through with her," said Black Bugeaud philosophically.

From this Lenoir seemed to draw an idea. His eyes sparkled, and Norbert guessed that he was already planning how the three of them could recapture Susette.

"If we agree," he said, "how can we make the trade?"

"I'll bring Chauret to the top of the cliff," replied Perodeau. "Send *mademoiselle* to me, and I'll let him come down."

"And if you don't?"

"Do you think I could manage two prisoners in the bush, and march, and fight?"

"It is done," said Lenoir. "How long before you'll come back with Chauret?"

"About two hours. Don't try to follow me. I'll finish the Cat if you try any tricks!"

Perodeau turned, with a flip of his snowshoes, and as he started he looked once full into the eyes of Susette Dubord. There was no less haughtiness in her glance than there had been when she first saw him in her father's house; but now there were also curiosity and a degree of wonder. Norbert took a little hope, but it was at once dispelled by the words she murmured for him to hear.

"As well one scoundrel as another. At least this one is less filthy than the others!"

Thus Norbert Perodeau, who shaved every day even in the bush, was sent upon her service with burning cheeks

and the beginning of a little resentment in his heart against this flawless daughter of the snows.

V

CHAURET LE CHAT received his captor in a dangerous silence, which he maintained even when he was allowed to get up from the bunk and share a hasty breakfast with Perodeau. He gave no thanks for the privilege of smoking; but he obeyed when he was told to get ready to march, and of necessity he submitted to having his wrists bound again.

There was no talk between the men until they were close to the edge of the cliff and Norbert called a halt.

"Chauret," he said, "I've traded you to your not very devoted men for *mademoiselle*. It seems they can't carry through the scheme for ransoming her without you, or they think they can't; and they are perfectly sure that the three of you will be able to kill me and take her prisoner again. Anyhow, they're going to send Mlle. Dubord up to me here, and I'm going to let you go free; but you're to stay down there at the shelter, all of you, until I tell you to come up—understand?"

Chauret's eyes took on a greenish cast, and for an instant Perodeau thought that the prisoner was going to spring at him with teeth and feet. All the things that the Cat had said before were as nothing to the curses which he now poured out.

"*Bon!*" exclaimed Norbert, when the other had at last run down. "I thank you for a treat! It is art, my friend, to swear like that. Now walk to the edge of the cliff, and I will signal Bugeaud of the black beard and the clever Lenoir, who is not so clever as he thinks."

Perodeau fired a shot into the air. The men jumped up from the fire and called Susette out of the shelter. At once she started for the cliff, and when she reached the top, Norbert slashed the rope that bound Chauret's wrists.

"*Revoir!*" he said. "I have no doubt I shall see you again, and soon!"

"*Malédiction!*" spat Chauret, already a dozen feet down the path. "I shall cut your heart out!"

Susette Dubord stood silently and contemptuously awaiting orders. Perodeau saw her glance stealthily at his knife, and he began to believe that she would try to turn it on him if she had the opportunity.

"*Mademoiselle,*" he said, "can you march? And how far? To St. Félicien?"

"I can go until I fall," she replied coldly.

Norbert decided that she ought to be spanked. However, he felt sure that she could not get back to her village alone. If she had to stop, and could not make a fire, it would probably mean death. His business, for a time, was here at the top of the cliff.

"Follow the trail I have just made," he said. "In about an hour you will come to my *cabane*. Wait there for me. I must keep these fellows where they are until you are as safe as I can make you for the present."

"Good luck!" she said mockingly. "And my thanks for your hospitality!"

"I shall have good luck," promised Perodeau grimly; "but some of those fellows down there may not. Go, *mademoiselle!* I am going to be busy, and time is worth much to both of us."

She obeyed with a shrug.

Norbert turned his attention to the three who stood by the shelter below. They stopped an earnest conversation to stare up at him. Suddenly Chauret snatched Black Bugeaud's rifle and took a quick shot. The bullet whistled uncomfortably close to Perodeau as he leaped for the safety of a tree.

In reply, he took careful aim and scattered embers from the fire at their feet. The men spread out, watching the cliff. There was no cover for them, and Bugeaud started for the path, evidently having more courage than sense. The next bullet from Perodeau's rifle

slashed the snow in front of him, and he halted.

Chauret dropped behind the flimsy shelter, having loaded his rifle, and fired again. Norbert shot into the mass of boughs. Meanwhile Lenoir was going toward the opposite side of the little valley. Perodeau made him jump like a frightened deer.

Bugeaud and Lenoir now accepted the situation, but the Cat, apparently so furious that he did not care whether he was hit, kept up an intermittent fire from behind the shelter. There was always a chance that one of his bullets would find Norbert in the act of looking out from behind his tree.

For more than an hour Perodeau guarded the cliff, firing now and then to remind those in the valley that he was still with them. When he felt sure that Susette had had time to reach his camp, he fired a farewell shot and retreated without exposing himself.

With head bent and a flurry of snow going before him, he raced for the *cabane*. How much longer they would wait down there in the valley before they discovered that he had gone was uncertain; but he did not doubt that he would be able to reach camp ahead of them, and to get in a supply of wood and water. He expected to be besieged.

Perodeau traveled at his best speed until he came out into the little clearing around his *cabane*. There he slowed down, breathing hard, and halfway to the small log building he stopped. That Susette was here he knew by her tracks, and he thought it might be well to let her know that he was coming. She might be alarmed if he walked in without warning.

"*Mademoiselle!*" he shouted. "It's me, Perodeau!"

The reply was the whiplike crack of a rifle, and a thin drift of smoke faded along the door, which stood open a few inches.

For a moment Norbert Perodeau was raging. Indifferent to the fact that he presented a fine target, he plunged headlong for the doorway, hit the plank door with his shoulder, and bounded into the *cabane*, to find Mlle. Susette struggling with a cartridge jammed in an old rifle which he seldom used. He snatched the weapon out of her grasp and flung it down.

"Are you trying to kill me?" he cried.

"There was only one cartridge of the right caliber for that rifle," she said calmly, while her eyes defied him. "So I tried another, and it stuck—unfortunately, my good fellow!"

"Are you anxious to cost your father ten thousand dollars?" demanded Norbert sarcastically. "Or is it that you can't bear to look at me for a few hours?"

"Is that what you are going to ask for me?"

"I? *Nom du ciel!* That is what Chauret le Chat was going to make M. Dubord pay! He'll do it yet, if he can kill me!"

"As well pay it to him as to you!"

"Do you still think that I am a bandit?"

"Why not?" She moved her shoulders indifferently, and sat down in the big chair that Perodeau had made for his lonely evenings. It was covered with blankets, and very comfortable. "I am taken out of my house by two unwashed scoundrels, who beat my father and a servant. Then I am taken from them by another. Is there any difference?"

"At least, *mademoiselle*, I have a better acquaintance with soap than the men of Chauret," protested Norbert. "You have granted me that!"

He grabbed the water pails and went out hurriedly. There was no time now to argue with this spoiled girl. It seemed that the light of his vision had turned into a flame which scorched him.

Perodeau brought water and stacked firewood behind the stove. He took their snowshoes inside and barricaded

the door with a bench. Then, when the magazine of his rifle was filled again, he allowed himself time to think.

There would be a search made for Susette Dubord—a search in which neither men nor money would be spared. It seemed certain that Chauret would try to recapture the notary's daughter at once. Sooner or later the men of St. Félicien would arrive at Perodeau's *cabane*. The Cat would have to act quickly, and Norbert's problem was to hold out.

Susette Dubord watched him, looking even more lovely with the pallor of weariness than she had when he first saw her. She had taken off her short coat of sealskin and her cap. Light from one of the windows struck her hair and brought out the rich hint of copper. The dark eyes were inscrutable, aloof, and very beautiful. Perodeau decided that he was a fool, and was glad of it.

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked suddenly. "I am sure my father would be glad to pay you for taking me to St. Félicien."

"You must realize that it's impossible to get past Chauret and his men," replied Perodeau, with a suspicion that she was baiting him. "I could have held them in the valley all day, but the trip was beyond your strength. Now we must wait for the searchers to find us. No doubt Chauret will try to take the *cabane*. I am watching for an attack, but I have plenty of cartridges, and we can hold out until night, anyway."

"You might get me something to eat," she suggested. "I have had nothing since supper last night, and I have walked farther than I ever did before."

"I am truly sorry, *mademoiselle*," said Norbert, "but I must keep a constant guard. Le Chat and his men may come out of the woods with a rush from three directions at once. They may try to sneak up one by one. I cannot leave the windows long enough to cook. You, after you have rested, must get something for both of us."

To that she made no reply at the time; but a little later she rose and went about the business of cooking a meal. She placed it on a home-made table that stood alongside the inner wall, and Norbert, always with his rifle at hand, ate in snatches between tours of the four windows. Susette Dubord was silent, apparently much taken with her own thoughts.

VI

At the end of the meal Susette went back to the big chair by the fire. Dishes and food remained on the table.

In the bush it is expected that every man will do his share of the work, if he is able. These two were not only in the bush; they were in grave danger. Perodeau looked at the dishes with scraps of food on them, and at Susette Dubord. Wrath stirred within him, as water begins to boil. At their first meeting she had called him a beggar—insolent—and he had given her three silver foxes. He had risked his life for her, and she had compared him to Black Bugeaud and Lenoir. These things he had borne, but the dishes were too much.

"*Mademoiselle*," he began, stopping by one of the windows, "I have a few words to say to the proud daughter of M. Donat Dubord."

She looked at him with a hint of surprise, for there was mockery in his voice. Perodeau was smiling. She stared.

"Can I help it, if you choose to talk?"

"*Bien!*" he exclaimed. "She gives her gracious consent! *Mademoiselle*, I went to the house of your father to sell three silver fox pelts. I saw you, the beautiful Susette Dubord, of whom I had heard. The pelts were yours instantly, just as my heart and my life were yours. I thought I had seen a vision. Then I suspected that there was something wrong with the beggar

I saw in your kitchen. I followed him, and found that he was an outlaw. I captured him, and exchanged my prisoner for you. Now I am trying to protect you and save your father from paying a ransom. Because I am doing this, my life at this moment is not worth a muskrat hide; but the vision I thought I saw, *mademoiselle,* was a mirage. It was one of those pictures that men see in the desert where there is nothing. *Bon Dieu,* I have been a fool, but I am not a slave! You cook food for me only because you are hungry yourself, and now you sit at ease while I patrol the camp, which I shall have to do for many hours. *Mademoiselle,* wash those dishes!"

No one had ever spoken thus to Susette Dubord. From all men had come sugar plums and lollipops when she was a child, and still sweeter words when she grew older. Now she was erect alongside her chair, and the hazel eyes which were so wide and beautiful, seemed to have little glowing coals of fire in them.

"How dare you speak to me like that?" she cried.

"*Wash those dishes!*" thundered Norbert, whose smile was gone.

"I will not!"

Perodeau set his rifle against the wall, after a hasty glance out of doors, and advanced to her chair.

"Wash the dishes, *mademoiselle,*" he said quietly, "or I will take you over my knee and give you one of the spankings you should have had. Something may be permitted to a man in my position."

Susette Dubord drew a gasping breath. The sudden whiteness of her face told Norbert that she believed he meant it. For himself, he did not quite know whether he meant it or not. It was sufficient that she thought so.

She turned and went silently to the table, gathered up the few dishes, and took them to the wooden sink. Perodeau went back to his vigil. He knew a feeling of satisfaction so vast that it seemed he could not contain it. Let Chauret le Chat come on now! Susette Dubord was washing dishes!

But Chauret did not come, and the hours marched on. The dishes had long since been dried and set carefully back in their places, and Susette was again in the chair by the stove. From time to time Perodeau fed the fire with big chunks of wood.

The first shadows of late afternoon came creeping into the *cabane.* Mlle. Dubord had not spoken since the threat of a spanking. She ignored her guardian. When he looked at her, she looked through him.

The situation was now becoming very serious. In a short time Perodeau would not be able to see any one approaching the *cabane.* He would not dare to light candles, for if he did, Chauret and his men could shoot in without danger to themselves or fear of hitting Susette. It must be that the Cat had located the searching party and found that he could afford to wait for darkness.

"*Mademoiselle,*" said Norbert, speaking for the first time since the washing of the dishes, "I believe Chauret is planning to attack after dark. When they come, climb into my bunk, and stay there. I shall fight, for naturally one desires to live as long as possible; but no doubt they will kill me in the end. There is no great danger to you, because you are worth much money to them. Make yourself small, then, when the fighting begins."

"I understand, *monsieur le bûcheron!*" she said.

Perodeau grew red, and was thankful for the growing darkness. The girl would not call him by his name. He very nearly gave up the idea of saying what had been in his heart this past hour; but, after all, of what use was pride to a dead man? So he spoke from the shadows of a corner where he had sat down to wait, now that it was useless to patrol the windows.

"I have loved you from the first mo-

ment until now," he told her quietly, "and I shall love you when the end comes. That is the reason for all I have done."

From the dim shape that was the chair by the stove came no reply, but Norbert was not sorry that he had spoken. He was not ashamed of anything. If this were his last night to live, he would go out of the world fearlessly and with no fog of misunderstanding between himself and the girl for whose sake he had come to this situation. Let her think what she would of him!

That for which Norbert Perodeau waited came somewhat after the manner he had expected. There was a stealthy pressure against the door, revealed by the creaking of a plank. While Perodeau's rifle was in readiness, it would have been suicide for a man to attempt to get into that room through a window. The door offered the best point of attack.

"They have come," he said.

He heard Susette move to the bunk. Then he loosened his knife in its leather sheath and stepped toward the door. His *bottes sauvages* made no sound. Already there was a cartridge in the chamber of his rifle. He cocked it.

"Who is there?" he called, and instantly moved close against the log wall.

His answer was a bullet that bored through the door and went into a log on the other side of the room. Norbert stepped out far enough to fire a return shot. The empty shell tinkled on the floor as he threw another shell from magazine to chamber.

Tense seconds passed. Except for the faint murmur of the fire there was no sound.

Suddenly the room was filled with the thundering crash of a mighty blow. The bench with which Perodeau had braced the door cracked, and the door itself rattled upon loosened hinges. They must be using a log for a battering ram. The next blow, or the one after that, would let them in for a hand-to-hand encounter.

It was the second thrust of the log that did it. Log and door and bench and a dark mass of men were carried nearly to the stove by the force of the attack. As Norbert fired, he heard a crash of glass. That meant another attack by one of the windows. He started to get his back against a wall just as a pair of arms encircled his legs. His rifle swung and thumped solidly; the arms relaxed. Norbert jumped clear of that danger. Then something jolted him from head to heels, and streaks of fire laced the darkness of the *cabane*.

VII

WHEN Perodeau came to himself, the light of many candles was in his eyes. His first feeling was one of astonishment that he was still in this world. His head reminded him that it had stopped a club; and as he tried to move, ropes cut into his wrists. Tied up—on his own bunk, too, for there was the familiar wall!

He blinked into the candlelight. The *cabane* was filled with men, whose faces turned toward him as he moved; and Susette Dubord was looking at him from the big chair.

"*Voilà!*" Old Donat Dubord was waving his hands excitedly and pointing. "Look, *messieurs!* The scoundrel is recovering!"

The others were all strangers, with the exception of one man; and the presence of that one made Norbert think that this might be delirium. Chauret le Chat was in the *cabane*, with something like a smirk on his face and a rifle across his knees. How could it be that the Cat was free, while Norbert Perodeau lay bound like a criminal?

It was Chauret who replied to the notary.

"Yes, M. Dubord," he said, "I told you that the fellow was hard to kill.

I suspected that he was the robber they call Chauret le Chat when I saw him at your house. Who else could afford to give away three silver fox pelts? I followed him, and the rest is as you know. His men had the boldness to steal your daughter out of her own house. He came here to my *cabane* and turned my family out. *Hélas,* they had to go miles through the bush to a camp deserted by some choppers! He said he would pay me to be silent—me, Alphonse Bessette, who am an honest man! I was grateful to you, *monsieur le notaire.* Behold, I have restored your beautiful daughter. She herself saw me in the hands of this bandit. He lied to her, and pretended that I was one of them. *Mon Dieu,* it is thus, by his cunning, that he has always escaped the law! He left me with his men while he brought her here, and it is a miracle that I am not murdered; but I escaped, M. Dubord, and hurried to meet you. Now you have driven his men away, and you have the robber himself."

Thus Norbert Perodeau found himself Chauret le Chat to that score of men from St. Félicien. Susette Dubord sat with her little white hands drooping like lilies over the arms of the chair and her lips silent. Did she believe that Norbert was the real Chauret? Impossible! This was revenge, perhaps because he had presumed to love her. How could she be capable of such inhuman coldness, of such ingratitude? Mirage, indeed!

"*Ciel!*" breathed the notary. "But for you, my friend Bessette, this fellow would have demanded ten thousand dollars, and I would have paid it to save my daughter. You shall be well rewarded. Back you go to St. Félicien with me, and I'll make you a present that will put you and your family beyond want!"

"Thanks, *monsieur,*" said Chauret piously. "My only regret is that the blow on the head did not finish the brutal fellow whom we have captured."

"Yes," agreed M. Dubord; "but we can hardly kill him now. He will be hanged legally, I hope, for some other crime."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Le Chat.

"Susette!" The notary turned to his daughter. "Did he ill treat you?"

"He made me wash dishes!" she cried.

"*Grand Dieu!*" exclaimed her father. "Wash dishes!"

"*Blasphème!*" swore Chauret. "He should be shot!"

"It would save trouble," agreed one of the citizens of St. Félicien, a very large man with a fierce mustache.

"I will attend to it," offered Le Chat with a trace of eagerness.

"No!" The man of the mustache shook his head regretfully. "I must remember that I am Jacques Morin, mayor of St. Félicien. I cannot allow it."

"But he will go to prison for many years," said M. Dubord. "I will attend to that, in the event that he is not hanged."

Perodeau listened to this cheerful conversation with an aching head and considerable doubt as to his immediate safety. Later he would be able to prove who he was, but for the present, without the help of Susette Dubord, he would remain Chauret le Chat; and the real Chauret had a fair chance of being able to kill him within the next few hours. A pretended attempt at escape—a shot or a knife thrust—trust the Cat to think of a scheme!

"It would be safe, and more convenient, for most of your men to go back to St. Félicien to-night, M. Dubord," proposed Chauret. "If *mademoiselle* does not feel able to travel, you and she are welcome to my *cabane.*"

Chauret was even more clever than Perodeau had thought. Not yet had he given up hope of that ten-thousand-dollar ransom. M. Dubord deliberated.

"Daughter," he said, "do you approve?"

"I would prefer to stay here and rest," she said; "but suppose those others, Chauret's men, should come back?"

"Poof!" exclaimed Le Chat. "Make no doubt they were terrified by the size of this party. Moreover, I shall be here."

"Nevertheless, let us keep one man," said Susette. "*Monsieur le maire,* will you stay with us?"

M. Jacques Morin filled his chest and curled up the ends of his very fierce mustache.

"It will be an honor, *mademoiselle!* Bessette and I can be very comfortable in that little shed at the rear of the *cabane,* with some blankets and a good fire."

"Then it is settled," said M. Dubord. The men began to pull on caps and mittens. "They might as well take the prisoner with them," added the notary.

"By no means!" cried Susette, with sudden spirit. "It would be cruel to make him march to-night, after that blow. See, his eyes are only half open! He has moved but once, and is not yet fully conscious. A man in that condition can give us no trouble, and to-morrow no doubt he'll be able to walk unassisted."

"Perhaps it is better, *mademoiselle,*" agreed Chauret, and he bared his teeth.

"Some of you lay him on the floor behind the stove," said Susette. "Will you help, M. Morin? Throw a blanket over him, for it will be cold when the fire goes down."

"An angel!" purred Chauret, like a cat in a cream jug.

He helped the mayor to carry Norbert from the bunk, and contrived to bump his head soundly as they laid him down. Perodeau kept his eyes half closed, but he saw something which gave him great joy. His knife was in its sheath; in the excitement they had neglected to take it away from him, and now neither Le Chat nor Mayor Morin noticed it.

VIII

THE rays of one candle drove the shadows back from around the little table where it stood, and struck faintly against a frosted window. Perodeau, lying on the hard floor behind the stove, cramped by his bonds, was thankful for that much light. For a long time he had been listening to the murmur of the fire, to the slight sounds of movement from the two bunks. Susette had the lower one, her father the upper. The mayor of St. Félicien and Chauret le Chat had long since gone to their quarters in the woodshed. The glow of their fire struck red against the windows when it blazed up now and then.

Ever since he had been left alone Perodeau had been working hard. Gradually he had slipped his knife belt around until he could reach the haft of the weapon, and after a long time he had managed to draw it out of the sheath. The greatest task was to shift it with his fingers so that the blade would come against the cords that bound his wrists. He had cut himself more than once, but at last he had succeeded, and now his hands and feet were free under the blanket.

Regular breathing was coming from the bunks, with occasionally a snore from M. Dubord. The notary and his daughter must be asleep. Norbert was ready to go out and put his knees in the stomach of Chauret le Chat.

Without any warning sound the blanket curtain that Susette had stretched in front of her bunk parted. Perodeau saw a small hand come forth; then a pair of feet shod with dainty moccasins swung to the floor, and the notary's daughter began a cautious progress across the room. She met his eyes, but he learned nothing from them. At the sink she found a small, very sharp knife which he used for paring potatoes. She came and

knelt beside him purposefully.

"The knife is more certain than the bullet, *mademoiselle,*" said Norbert in a whisper. "I am glad you have chosen wisely this time!"

"*Imbécile!*" she snapped. "I have come to set you free! In the morning, *monsieur,* I shall tell my father that you are not a robber. Then you and he and the mayor will take that Chauret to St. Félicien."

"That is more to my liking," answered Perodeau, with a singing heart; "but I should like very much to know why you let them think I was Chauret le Chat, when you did not believe it yourself. Chauret thought you did, but I knew better!"

"It was the dish washing, madman! I had to have my revenge!"

Perodeau chuckled. He would have liked to lie there indefinitely, with Susette bending over him, but he knew that the time for action had come. With a sweep of his arm he threw the blanket aside and sat up, knife in hand.

"A thousand thanks," he said; "but I have freed myself—look! Nevertheless, that you have come to help me is worth more to me than money is to Chauret.

"That's just like you," she blazed, "to do it yourself, when I have been planning for hours—"

Her sentence was not finished. The doorlatch clicked, and Perodeau sprang to his feet. The door was being opened slowly from outside. Into the room stepped Chauret le Chat, with his knife drawn. At sight of Norbert free and armed he became motionless. His eyes swung to Susette.

"So you knew!" he exclaimed. "If I had been able to see through the frost of the windows, I should certainly have used my rifle!"

"You thought you could make me believe that Norbert Perodeau was a criminal!" cried the girl. "There is as much difference between you and him as there is between a vicious mongrel and—"

"That will cost your father something extra!" growled Chauret. "He and that fool of a mayor, whom I have trussed up like a pig, will have to pay well to see St. Félicien again!"

Perodeau moved toward the Cat with a light step. His knife was advanced, point upward, ready for attack or defense.

"Stand!" he cried. "You've got to fight now!"

"Fight?" screamed Chauret, and he flung himself at Norbert.

Chauret le Chat was the heavier, broader man, and he was quick to a degree; but his rage was against him in that first charge. Perodeau parried his thrust and slipped his own point through his antagonist's jacket and shirt. Chauret gave ground in time to save himself from more than a maddening prick. He thrust again, and followed the attack with his weight so recklessly that he bore down Norbert's guard. The two men were locked breast to breast.

That unexpected test of strength changed Perodeau's plan of battle. He had intended to fight at a distance, avoiding punishment, and depending upon his skill and coolness. Now he suddenly realized that while Chauret might be bigger of muscle and frame, his strength was less.

Norbert dropped his weapon and seized his enemy's knife hand. They swung and twisted across the room. The table splintered from its fastenings when they fell against it; and then it was that Perodeau found the hold he wanted upon the arm of Chauret le Chat.

Drops stood out upon Chauret's forehead as he fought to break that hold. He squealed with pain, and his knife fell to the floor. Norbert set his foot upon it and struck one solid blow to the stomach. Chauret went down and lay without movement.

Perodeau straightened up, with the knife in his hand. Susette was beside him, holding the stove poker. The

flaming light of battle was in her eyes.

"You moved so fast I couldn't get a chance at him with the poker," she said regretfully. "I don't think you want my help!"

"I want—" began Norbert, when a sharp command rang in his astonished ears and brought him spinning around.

"Put your hands up, scoundrel!"

Donat Dubord held a leveled rifle, and his face was grim with determination. Perodeau lifted his arms. Susette sprang between the two men.

"Father!" she cried. "What are you doing?"

"I have never shot a man," answered M. Dubord firmly, "but I amgoing to shoot that fellow if he makes a move!"

"You are not!"

"Why not? Have you lost your senses?"

"Because I am going to marry him," said Susette, a little wildly. "That's why! The man on the floor is the robber, Chauret. This is M. Norbert Perodeau, who saved me from Chauret le Chat. I didn't tell you at first because —because he made me wash dishes!"

Donat Dubord, the rich and dignified notary of St. Félicien, sat down upon the edge of the bunk, and the rifle drooped in his hands.

"Maybe I am mad," he muttered; "or is this a nightmare?"

"It is a dream of happiness for me, *monsieur,*" said Norbert.

He turned to Susette, and for the first time her eyes fell before his. He lifted her hand to his lips.

"We are all mad!" said the notary, as he stared at his unresisting daughter. "He made her wash dishes, and she wants to marry him!"

Later, when Chauret le Chat had been securely bound with the rope he had used on the outraged Mayor Morin, there was a degree of calm in the *cabane.* The mayor's mustache had been restored to its normal fierceness by the pleasure of trussing up Chauret. He and the still dazed notary conferred as to the prisoner's fate.

Norbert and Susette sat at the opposite end of the room. They looked at each other as thirsty people drink, and now and then they spoke.

"Why did you shoot at me, light of my life?" asked Perodeau fondly.

"I didn't," replied Susette, laughing like a naughty little girl. "I fired into the air."

"But why did you treat me so badly," persisted Norbert, as he gathered up both her hands, "even before I made you wash dishes?"

"Because," she whispered, leaning toward him, "from the first I was afraid I would fall in love with you!"

THE END

THE QUARREL

THEN you have nothing more to say? Well, go!
Have you your gloves, your stick, your hat?
Was it your fault, or mine? I do not know
We never shall agree to that!

Oh, wait! I quite forgot; here is your ring
And your three red-bound music books.
There now! I think that you have everything,
Your coat? It's hanging on those hooks!

Why don't you go? It's getting very late—
Your fault? No, mine! Why don't you go?
It's raining hard—perhaps you'd better wait;
And anyhow, I love you so!

Mildred Fages

The baron swept her into his arms and covered her face with lawless kisses

The Viking Woman

A Nordic beauty with sea-green eyes smiles her way into a man's soul, whereupon grim tragedy casts its shadow athwart four lives

By Polan Banks

SELMA paused at the foot of the great staircase, which was the pride of Castle Paulstersholm and of half the province of Skane besides, and smiled down at the man who was bowing over her hand.

Slim, lithe and full-bosomed, she stood like a goddess, a blond, Viking goddess. A half sad smile was on her face, an inscrutable Mona Lisa gaze in her deep green eyes.

"Good night, Anders." She spoke softly, and added in a whisper: "I will be ready at midnight."

"Pleasant dreams, my lady," the man responded aloud, and then, under his breath, very quickly: "You have the revolver?"

By way of reply, her slim hand wandered lightly to the bodice of her dinner gown. With a nod of approval, his eyes on hers, Anders Lengerlof stepped back to permit his host to bid the girl good night.

"I'm sorry you're retiring so early, Selma," Baron Sigfrid von Pauli remarked suavely, masking his disappointment. "You must be frightfully bored!"

He seemed to devour her with his eyes, while another of his guests, Nils Christi, answered acidly:

"Who wouldn't be—shut up all week in this gloomy old pile? Selma and I might have been on our way to America if we hadn't been trapped here by this confounded snow!"

"Trapped—" the girl echoed, a bit apprehensively. Her gaze sought Anders's eyes and clung to them for a moment. Reassuringly he smiled, touching his breast. Subconsciously her hand again reached for the hidden little pistol.

"Our Selma is not going to America or anywhere else," the baron said firmly. "She belongs to Sweden. Her art, her loveliness—"

He clutched Selma's hand possessively, apparently not noticing that she shrank from him.

"Don't be a fool, Sigfrid!" snapped Christi, gazing in admiration at the girl whom all Stockholm toasted. "I shall take her back to Hollywood and make her the most sensational star the screen has ever known!"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," the baron said harshly. "We discovered her, Anders and I. She is ours! She is Sweden's!"

II

ANDERS LENGERLOF and Sigfrid von Pauli had been classmates at Upsala. Upon graduation von Pauli had entered the Riksdag and a diplomatic career, while his comrade had embraced art as his life work. Nevertheless, they had kept in touch with each other. Sigfrid, with an eye to philandering, had used his friend as a means of access to the forbidden pleasures of sophisticated Stockholm, posing as a patron of art.

The two friends were strolling through the *Störtorget*—that great market which is the central square of the Venice of the North—and had paused to contemplate the animated bartering at the *Stor Kyrkan* or Market Church.

Their attention was challenged by a fisher girl, rather scantily clad, but unmindful of petty externals, who was leading a drunken old fisherman toward the dock. The comrades watched her, unassisted, help him aboard a fishing smack and observed that she was about to take up the anchor.

At that moment she looked up and responded to their gaze with a mystical smile. Anders sprung forward as if inspired.

Half an hour later found the two young men seated on the deck of the little boat, chaperoned only by the fisherman who lay sprawled in a drunken stupor, and a bright-eyed urchin, crouched forward, munching a piece of crisp *knäckbrod*.

Anders, propped against empty fish baskets, was silently sketching the girl while Sigfrid engaged her in spasmodic conversation.

Her name was Selma Sondersson, and she sailed the smack unaided, superbly self-sufficient. Standing at the tiller, the wind tearing at her pale green-gold hair and outlining the slimly suggestive curves of her body, she seemed more like a goddess of the sea than the niece of an intoxicated fisherman.

Anders's sketch was the inspiration of the painting he later made of her, entitled "The Viking Woman," which was to bring them both fame. It showed Selma just as she had been at the prow of her boat, facing the wind in an ecstasy of defiance.

Inevitably, the two fell in love. Anders was stirred by her wistful smile; her husky voice held fascination, and the eyes that were like the sea which had mothered her, completed the conquest.

They strolled, hand in hand, along

the streets that bordered the canals and watched the busy little passenger steamers laden with commuters leaving the city, and the darting motor boats. Together, too, they gazed down at the *Norrström* from the rail of the palace bridge and whispered and dreamed. It was glorious to be in love! Or was it love?

To the rest of the world Selma was cold and regally aloof as Freya herself, but when Anders kissed her the maiden was all aflame—a tender, sensuous luring fire. And as his heart visualized, his brush painted her.

"The Viking Woman" was hailed as a sensation when it was first shown at a masquerade ball, an informal exhibition given by the artist colony of Stockholm. And again, when officially exhibited before royalty, society and the critical art world, it drew unstinted praise.

Selma, present with Anders and Baron Sigfrid at the latter exhibition, was as much a sensation as the portrait. Sigfrid, observing her sudden popularity with half the males present, characteristically became infatuated with her, much to Anders's annoyance. But the real menace to the young artist's happiness came with Nils Christi.

Christi, a Swedish cinema star who had gone to Hollywood and gained a great name as a director, was in Stockholm in search of screen talent. He had visited Saltsjöbaden, the fashionable sea-bathing resort, and Falsterbo, the Lido of Scandinavia; he had gone into rustic Dalecarlia, where the girls still wore costumes of a bygone century in the little towns about Lake Siljian, and even into the mountain country of Jämtland, for the winter sports —in his hope of finding another Greta Garbo.

And then, unexpectedly he had seen "The Viking Woman" and later Selma herself.

He was intrigued personally by her sensuous beauty as much as by her film possibilities and, falling in love, determined to possess her. Selma Sondersson had that effect on men.

But Christi was too canny to advance precipitously. There was Anders to be considered, and the baron. Both, he knew, were rivals, and the girl apparently had placed her destiny in their hands.

A few days after the official exhibition opened, Selma Sondersson was the talk of Stockholm. Other artists besieged her to sit for them—theatrical managers waved contracts — wealthy rakes and men about town showered her with attentions.

The obscure fisher girl had become famous. Her brain was in a whirl. Dark shadows began to show under her sea-green eyes.

III

THEN von Pauli suggested that Selma and Anders slip away with him to his ancestral castle in Scania for a few days' rest and time in which to think things over. His aunt, the old countess, would act as chaperone.

Nils Christi, invited to join the party, was determined to win Selma's consent to go to America with him. Thus the three men and the woman they loved went to Paulstersholm.

Before they had been in the castle twenty-four hours, both Selma and Anders regretted having accepted the invitation. The aged countess was deaf and disagreeable, and held herself aloof, seldom appearing even for meals, so her chaperonage was a farce.

A furious snowstorm which began the morning after their arrival kept the party indoors for nearly a week.

Snowbound in a castle in Skane. A modernized, yet still medieval, Paulstersholm. Great halls and galleries, antique furniture, huge Flemish tapestries, somber family canvases. Vaulted cellars, stocked well with century-old cheer against just such weather as this. But gloomy, nevertheless, and faintly breathing of tragedy.

One woman and three men, all in-

fatuated with her. Propinquity, jealous rivalry.

Selma, realizing the situation, grew annoyed and worried and panicky by degrees. The tension tightened as the days passed slowly, each man eying his rivals with cold fury, while outside was a wall of falling snow.

Sigfrid's attentions became offensive. Selma, frightened, appealed to Anders, who gave her his little automatic for protection.

By the sixth day the situation had become unbearable, and Anders's patience was at an end. Although the storm had blown itself out, the baron would not permit his guests to return to Stockholm.

By means of bribery, Anders induced a stable man to harness a pair of horses to a sleigh and have it ready for travel that night. Selma agreed to meet him at her window at midnight.

Shortly after dinner the girl complained of a headache and signified her intention of retiring for the night. In the bosom of her gown was hidden a revolver, and in her heart was the knowledge that Anders would come for her at midnight to take her away from the castle where they were held as involuntary guests.

The glamorous vision of Hollywood and the life of a screen star as depicted by Christi had intrigued her, naturally, but her distrust of the director filled the former fisher girl with vague foreboding.

IV

As she stood at the foot of the great staircase, bidding them good night, Sigfrid and Nils Christi were quarreling over her! The baron had indulged too freely in the vintage of Paulstersholm and was not quite himself. When he looked at her and kissed her hand, the girl shivered.

"You are too flattering," she said, "but I am tired, and so you will please excuse me until the morning."

Again they made complimentary adieus as they lingered at the foot of the staircase. Sigfrid, staring at the rise and fall of her bosom, remarked queerly: "You'd better go to sleep right away, Selma, or you may see the ghost of Paulstersholm."

"What ghost?" asked the girl, a little stiffly.

"One of my ancestors, General von Pauli, was murdered in the tower room that adjoins your boudoir on the right—"

"What's all this nonsense?" Christi demanded gruffly. Sigfrid, ignoring him, went on talking.

"His bride occupied your suite. There's a connecting door between the two boudoirs. But it's locked, now, and covered with tapestry."

"What happened to the general?" Selma asked politely.

"Nothing much, except that he was killed in that room, shortly after his marriage. To this day nobody knows why, or who killed him. There used to be a tradition that a ghost visited his bride at nights for years afterward. She never remarried. Of course it's all a legend," he added hastily. "I hope I haven't frightened you. Perhaps you would like one of the maids to sleep with you?"

Selma thought of her midnight rendezvous and, shaking her head, climbed the stairway.

The three men returned to the stately dining room. Sigfrid ordered more bottles from the cellar. Anders, lost in thought, barely sipped his drink. Christi also drank sparingly, watching his host.

The baron, imbibing a great deal, talked even more. Finally he declared he was ready for bed. Anders, wondering whether the stableman would keep his word, promptly acquiesced. Soon the three were in their rooms. Silence fell on Castle Paulstersholm.

V

THE hours dragged by, and to Selma it seemed that midnight would

never come. She was fully dressed, except for her coat and hat. Her bag was packed. Nervously she lit all the fresh candles in the candelabra and wall brackets, flooding the boudoir with light. And waited.

Just before midnight Selma heard sounds which drew her to the window. Through the darkness she could make out a sleigh, with horses champing in the snow. She saw a figure remove a small ladder from the back of the sleigh, with which to mount to the balcony.

Flinging open the French windows, Selma faced a gust of bitterly cold wind. She reached for her coat, hat and bag, but stopped abruptly with a smothered scream.

Just across the room, not ten feet away, the tapestry hung on the opposite wall was moving—bulging! The girl went cold with fright, recalling Sigfrid's story. The wraith of Paulstersholm!

Before she could cry out or make a move to escape, an apparition stepped from behind the hanging. It proved to be a very physical specter in a vivid-hued silk dressing gown.

Baron Sigfrid von Pauli was smiling sardonically.

"Surprised to see me, Selma dear?" He leered and bowed gracefully. "I'm the ghost of General von Pauli, at your service!"

The girl who had braved many a storm at sea in a tiny boat quickly recovered her self-possession. Could Sigfrid have learned of her proposed flight? Had the stableman double crossed Anders? She thought of the sleigh outside, and her lover with the ladder. Suppose the baron were to discover—but what if he did? He had no right to make them stay!

While these questions raced through the girl's mind, Sigfrid, with a curious gloating smile, was walking toward her. Suddenly he swept the astonished woman into his arms and kissed her.

The embrace was odious enough, but fumes of alcohol made the monster even more repulsive. With a little scream of fear and disgust, she wriggled loose and hit him painfully across the face with the flat of her hand.

Sigfrid stared uncomprehendingly for a moment, filled with both anger and admiration. Deliberately he eyed her slim figure, then reached out once more. Panic-stricken, she attempted to reach the window opening on the balcony, but a heavy hand seized her immediately. Again the baron swept her into his arms and covered her face with nauseating kisses, despite her furious resistance.

Suddenly there was a sound behind them and Selma felt herself released so quickly she almost fell. She whirled about.

"Anders!"

Silently her lover stood in the doorway, ablaze with rage. The baron laughed, a bit unsteadily.

"So my dear friend Anders has been hiding in milady's bedroom!" he declared maliciously. "Virtue has indeed—"

The other man took a step forward, his features grim.

"I will probably kill you, Sigfrid," Anders said quietly, and there was a deadliness in his tone that brought a pallor to his host's face.

"Keep away from me!" Sigfrid cried. "You don't understand—a joke—this ghost business—"

Anders's blue eyes glinted mercilessly.

With a snarl the baron reached into his pocket for a pearl-handled pistol and fired point-blank at his erstwhile friend.

Selma screamed.

Anders, a look of surprise changing his features, clutched at his shoulder, then dropped down to a knee rather grotesquely.

Sigfrid coldly raised the weapon again, as if to finish what he had begun.

Simultaneously Selma withdrew a

weapon from her bosom and pressed the trigger.

Although her head was spinning from the report, she was aware that the baron had fallen flat on his face and was still. Then she swooned.

VI

THE next thing of which Selma was aware was that Nils Christi had appeared, as if materialized out of thin air. He was anxiously chafing her hands. Her eyes sought out Anders—he was seated on the floor, clutching his shoulder and watching her with concerned eyes.

"I followed von Pauli from his room," Niles was saying, "but I lost him in the corridors and arrived here too late."

"Is he—is he—"

Christi glanced at the prostrate figure, but avoided her eyes when he answered.

"Just what he deserved. He's dead—the hound!"

"Oh—" Selma felt faint, nauseated, terror struck. She had killed a man! "Oh—"

"We must get you away from here quickly," Nils told her. He looked at Anders.

"There's a sleigh—waiting outside—" the artist returned jerkily.

"Excellent!" Christi sprang to his feet, forbearing to question further. Here was his opportunity to take Selma to America, and perhaps losing Anders, his rival.

As if in answer to his thoughts, Selma said: "Anders goes with us, of course."

Seeing it was useless to argue, Nils assented. Supporting the wounded man between them, after hastily binding his shoulder with part of a bed sheet, they managed to get him to the balcony and down the ladder into the sleigh below. Then Christi went back for his hat and big fur coat.

No one, apparently, had heard the shots. The old countess was deaf and none of the servants were to be seen. Snow was still falling, but lightly, and there was a cold nip to the air.

Christi took the reins. A minute later the sleigh had swept out of the courtyard, down the drive, across the bridged moat and turned in the direction of the highroad, buried under deep snow. Silently they fled through the luminous white night, Christi standing in the teeth of the wind, lashing the horses; Selma, bundled in robes, holding her lover's head on her shoulder, unaware that he had fallen into a semi-stupor.

On through the snowy night went the fugitives, skirting inlets and streams, gullies and fields and forest. Soon they were in a little fishing village that lay four or five miles from the castle.

All was dark, but Christi, stopping before the largest of the cottages, pounded on the door. A grizzled fisherman appeared, helped them carry the wounded man within, and threw more wood on the fire. Christi explained Anders had been shot accidentally, and must be taken immediately to a physician. Where was the nearest?

The fisherman, examining the wound as Selma redressed it, agreed that surgical aid was necessary. There was no doctor nearer than Carlebo, some five miles across the bay, to the north.

"Can we get a boat from there to go to Denmark?" Christi inquired.

The fisherman shook his head. They would have to go south to Bertil Larson's farmstead, where there was a motor yacht they might be able to hire. There was no doctor at Larson's Landing, however.

"Doctor or no doctor," said Christi, looking worried, "we'll go to this Larson's!"

"First we'll go to Carlebo," Selma announced firmly. "Anders's wound is too dangerous to be neglected."

"But," Nils whispered tensely, "do you realize what will happen if you're

caught before you can get out of the country? Twenty years in prison! Think of that!"

She looked at the semi-unconscious Anders, the mystical smile that was characteristic of her charm playing about her mouth. Tears came to her eyes.

"If saving Anders's life means prison for me, then, of course, I will go to prison."

"Don't be reckless!" Nils whispered. "Can't you see—"

At this juncture the fisherman broke in.

"My boat isn't here," he said. "My two sons took it with their catch, to Malmo, last week, before the storm, and are most likely waiting there for the weather to break. There isn't a big boat in the whole village to-night. I've got only a little boat—"

"Take us anyway!" cried Christi. "I'll give you five hundred *öre* to take us to Larson's Landing."

"Not for five thousand on a night like this, in that cockleshell!" the fisherman said grimly.

"But you *must*—please!" begged Selma. "We must get this man to a doctor!"

He nodded his head, adamant. He knew the storm's might.

"I'm a God-fearing man and humane as the next, but I wouldn't take the king himself to sea on a night like this. If you want to sail her to Carlebo yourselves at your own risk—take the boat and welcome, and pay me what you will. But me—I must consider my family; I'm only a poor fisherman."

"I'll do it," Selma said quietly. Her chin was firm. "I've handled boats in all sorts of weather. If this craft can float, I'll try it."

VII

FIFTEEN minutes later a tiny fishing smack put out to sea, with two male passengers lying on the deck and a woman at the helm.

One of the men was unconscious, although well wrapped, and lashed to the deck to keep him from rolling about. The other, wondering at his own temerity at having come on this hazardous cruise, clung to the thwarts and watched the helmswoman as she steered the craft.

Selma, a slight, high-breasted figure in fisherman's oilskins that seemed glued to her body by the spray and wind, stood in the stern, peering into the teeth of the gale.

It was an ugly night in which to be out upon the sea. Snow had stopped, but a brisk wind had come up and the waves were high and vicious. The little vessel struggled along, making headway with difficulty, as it catapulted down into a black valley of water to shoot up a liquid slope in the nick of time, while, like a Viking woman of old, Selma guided the frail craft, averting destruction time and again with her skillful steering.

Northward, ever northward, the ship fought its way in the face of a maniacal wind and furious sea, keeping afloat as if by a miracle.

Again and again a sea would wash over them, and Nils Christi would turn to bailing with desperation and fear in his heart. But the girl at the tiller gave no sign, other than to glance at Anders, for whose sake she was risking her life.

Magnificently defiant, she stood there, always fighting. As if she and her lover were daring the elements to do their worst, she kept her head high as she tremblingly whispered his name.

They seemed to have been battling with the sea for countless hours. Dawn, she knew, could not be far off. The headland for which they were blindly aiming—upon whose tip crouched Carlebo—suppose they should miss it, and head blindly out to sea? What then? Would dawn bring despair—providing they lived until then?

Selma was wet and cold and worn with struggling with the tiller, but her

spirit was unquenched. She was a daughter of the Viking sea fighters. She must not yield!

At dawn the wind abated, as did the sea. She spied a dark mass of land and, soon after, the smudgy red glow of a great fire upon the beach.

Then, with a sickening crash, the little craft suddenly ran full tilt upon a ledge of rocks, projecting from the surf, less than a hundred yards from shore—crashed, groaned and splintered. Water rushed in with a vicious hiss. The sail tilted crazily toward the eastern sky, like the broken wing of a bird. Slowly but surely the gallant fishing smack was sinking.

Selma stumbled through the rising water toward her lover. Anders apparently had come out of his semi-coma, assisted by the sharpness of the cold water which was drenching him, and was struggling to free himself from the lashings.

Nils Christi had found two life preservers. One he had donned hastily, the other he held out toward the woman.

"Put this on, quick!" he urged. "The time is short."

She took it dazedly, then looked down at Anders.

"Where's one for him?" she demanded. "He's helpless."

Nils shrugged his shoulders impatiently and howled above the wind: "There's only two. Hurry—"

The Viking woman stared at him in unbelief.

"You mean—to desert—Anders?" she asked.

His face was twisted with fear as he retorted:

"He could never make it—he's nearly dead now. Don't be a fool, Selma! Hurry!"

With a look of contempt she set about unlashing the imprisoned Lengerlof. The water had reached their knees, and she was forced to hold Anders's head above it, as she worked feverishly.

"Selma! Aren't you coming?" Nils Christi cried incredulously.

"It's no use!" said she.

Nils thought she referred to the shooting of the baron and its probable consequences, to her, once she reached shore.

"You didn't kill Sigfrid!" he shouted above the wind. "He's not dead! I told you that to make you come away with me to America—fame and fortune—"

"You're yellow!" she screamed. "You coward!"

The deck beneath them rocked uncertainly. There was a lull in the wind. They could hear the booming of the surf.

"Make up your mind, quick!" Nils demanded, fearfully eying the distant surf.

With a quick, swooping motion, Selma Sondersson snatched up the life preserver and flung it into the sea with all her might. The half sad, wistful smile of old—even in that tense moment—flickered back. And there was the flame of a terrible scorn in her deep green eyes.

"Follow that—coward!"

She clung to Anders and the mast in one embrace.

They were waist deep in water, now, and again the deck lurched alarmingly beneath their feet. Nils Christi was gone. All that could be heard was the howling of the wind and the remorseless boom of the surf.

Then, unexpectedly, help came. Fishermen on the shore saw the wrecked fishing smack on the reef, still miraculously afloat. And when a rescue boat reached them, the two Vikings—the Norseman with the blue eyes and the goddess with the green—were still clinging to the mast, sticking like a finger out of the sea pointing to Valhalla.

Rowing shoreward, they passed a bobbing life preserver. It was playing hide and seek with the tide among the rocks.

Plays and Players

An answer to the bemoaners and bewailers—the theater is neither dead nor dying

By Richard Lockridge

Portrait Drawings by Rafael

DOLEFULLY and as though from breaking hearts those who have given themselves over to viewing Broadway with alarm are singing, this year as always, their two laments. On the pages of magazines otherwise devoted almost altogether to recipes they tell their tales of woe. In newspaper columns and in letters to dramatic critics, they moan. Things are bad in our theaters. And chiefly their sorrow is that all our plays are, if not salacious, merely trivial. Sincerity? Honesty? Efforts of dramatists to tell the truth as they see it, and of actors and actresses to create parts as they are written? Suggest the possibility that these exist and hear the bitter laughter.

In the scorn of many of these critics there is no qualification. The theater, if you would believe them, is the one blot on an otherwise perfect world. Noble gentlemen may write books and compose music, may paint pictures and manufacture concrete sewer pipe. But only scandalous rascals have anything to do with plays. The theater is dying—and death is coming none too soon. And never have things been so bad as now.

Historically, of course, this is patently absurd. The sturdiness of the theater has, since the first plays were produced, managed to withstand direful predictions and rabid denunciation. Even if salacity and triviality were altogether triumphant along Broadway to-day it would mean nothing in particular, certainly not that the theater is dying, and will in a few years be but a memory. It would be lamentable, but not fatal. It is, however, not particularly true.

For this much abused season has produced several plays written quite apparently with honesty, with intelligence, and sometimes with insight. It has produced, too, the usual run of plays worth — as drama or as entertainment—precisely nothing whatever. I doubt that the proportion of theatrical material which has some claim to serious consideration is this year much smaller than usual. The percentage of such material is, of course, never very high.

The percentage of oxygen in the heavy air over New York's theatrical

district, too, is not very high—but it is probably high enough to sustain life. No theater is quite dead which, as its season passes the crest and slides down toward the summer trough, offers to its faithful such a play as Elmer Rice's "Street Scene," or such a wise and tender drama as Maxwell Anderson's "Gypsy." "Wings Over Europe" and "Dynamo" are evidences of animation; "The Marriage Bed" is an encouraging symptom; even "Serena Blandish" is not altogether a cause for discouragement. Not great plays, these, but far from worthless ones.

"Street Scene," if comparisons are to be indulged in, I would rate close to the season's best. And it is an encouraging indication of popular taste that William Brady's Playhouse has been filled almost every night since its opening. It is encouraging to every one,

ERIN O'BRIEN-MOORE

She plays, with sensitive understanding, the daughter in that sincere offering, "Street Scene"

CLAIBORNE FOSTER
in the leading rôle in Maxwell Anderson's play about the troubles of married lovers—"Gypsy"

not the least to Mr. Brady. For he took the play after many producers had looked at it doubtfully, assured Mr. Rice that it was very interesting, and regretted that there was no room for it in their schedules. Several of them, according to report, thought that it was a very sincere and moving play, but that the public would not have it. And among the organizations which refused it was the Theater Guild.

A sincere and moving play it unquestionably is. It is swiftly dramatic, at the same time it is simple without meretricious over-simplification; it is contemporary and real. Very likely it will have a life no longer in the annals of the theater than the day of which it treats, for by to-morrow it will be dated, and by day after to-morrow it may well be a relic. It is not a great play, on any scale of absolute values,

but it is a good play—solid and honest as the single set before which its action is played; intensely alive, inescapably actual. And it has been directed and staged with a high skill which contributes materially to its effectiveness.

Although its materials are in a sense general, the form in which they are cast makes the play peculiarly interesting to New Yorkers. For them it is a moment from the life of their own streets—any day, on almost any side of town, they can see precisely such a brownstone house front as rears itself on the stage at the Playhouse. In reality, according to authentic enough report, the stage set is the likeness of an apartment house at 25 West Sixty-Fifth Street, just off Central Park. There are such houses—between the tenements of the slums and the modern apartment houses—fronting the sidewalks of New York, "East Side, West Side, All Around the Town."

CLAUDETTE COLBERT
in Eugene O'Neill's symbolic "Dynamo," presented by the Theater Guild

In them teems just such varied life as on the stage pours out through the doors, creeps up the basement stairs, shouts from the windows. Men and women of every race, and of every racial mixture, live together in amicability and in bickering—are born, struggle through lives of no immoderate consequence, die. They hang crape on the door and a child wails at the first light from a baffling world; a boy and a girl make love on the front steps and another love affair ends, perhaps melodramatically, a floor or two above. It is life cluttered, bedraggled, fascinating. And particularly is it fascinating as a spectacle.

When one says that Mr. Rice has lifted a moment of this life up from the street to the stage, one is apt to do him an injustice—although constructively that is what he has done. But his realism is not entirely that of the photograph. There is plan to it, and artistic molding of events. It has been gathered together into a play, never merely hurled sprawling on the stage. Mr. Rice has, with considerable artistry, created the illusion that he is showing everything, while in reality, as becomes an artist, showing only so much as is germane to his purpose. As a result the play grows from act to act, has a very definite rhythm, and is never allowed to spread.

It is concerned with a murder—the murder of a guilty wife by a rage-crazed husband—and with the daughter of the two, played with sensitive understanding by Erin O'Brien-Moore. I will not trace the plot — already I have given it more space than is perhaps justified. My extenuation can only be that it moved me very greatly, and that I cannot recommend it too highly among the plays now available on the New York stage.

Before passing on to the other recent dramas which, it may be argued, provide oxygen to an expiring theater, it might be well to note another play by Mr. Rice which has had its day on Broadway. This play is "The Subway," written several years before "Street Scene," and produced some weeks afterward, being offered in Greenwich Village by the Lenox Hill Players—a little theater organization —and later moved uptown to the Theater Masque.

Although "The Subway" has moments of poignancy — mixed with many moments of somewhat sophomorical eloquence—it was chiefly interesting in its presentation as a milepost on the road Mr. Rice has trodden on the way to his present competence. It did, however, give an opportunity to Jane Hamilton, an attractive young woman who had never been on the stage before she took the lead in this expressionistic story of a girl beaten down by the rush and roar of the city. She is by no means a finished actress, but she is sensitive and charming.

Eugene O'Neill, abetted by the Theater Guild, offered "Dynamo" in mid-February. The occasion, although in many respects interesting, was by no means what had been hoped, for the writer, who is probably the most interesting of the country's dramatists, has in this play lapsed suddenly into adolescence. Only now and then do there appear evidences of those high poetic gifts which Mr. O'Neill unquestionably has, perhaps to the exclusion of a critical faculty.

"Dynamo" is a study, in somewhat symbolic form, of man's quest for God —a quest which Mr. O'Neill evidently feels has been materially complicated by modern civilization. Its protagonist is a youth who, robbed of the faith in conventional religion which his father not so much personifies as libels, goes out into the world seeking something in which he can believe. He returns to announce that God is electricity—and the dramatist seems to share his belief that a new name changes materially the character of an old thing.

Now in any terms, this belief in an

abstract God—a God which is the unmaterialized and unpersonified life force—is perhaps the highest conception to which men have yet attained. That they have had glimpses of it often enough is, of course, a truism. And Mr. O'Neill revealed his poetic insight into man's frailty when he showed how unable to maintain the high plane of that abstract belief is his protagonist. *Reuben Light,* the questioning boy, materializes his god in the dynamo—the obvious generative center—very much as the Children of Israel once sought to personify Him in the golden calf. And to this god—obviously as arbitrarily limited a god, despite its modernity, as any man has ever created—he sacrifices himself and the girl he loves.

RUTH GORDON
who has the chief rôle in " Serena Blandish," a Jed Harris production

There is more in the play than has been here summarized, and more on

the same theme is yet to be offered, for Mr. O'Neill has written "Dynamo" as the first play of a trilogy. His treatment — which includes the asides he used, with so much more success, in "Strange Interlude" — is interesting, and he is bringing thought to the theater. But the thought of "Dynamo" seems to me very groping.

The play, as presented by the Guild, is only moderately well acted. Glenn Anders and Claudette Colbert, in the leading rôles, are but little more than competent. The cast also includes, among others, Dudley Digges, Helen Westley, Catherine Calhoun, Don Doucet and George Gaul.

Maxwell Anderson, in "Gypsy," has written another of his stories—always tender and understanding — of the troubles of married lovers. In this play his protagonist is *Ellen*, a girl who, while desiring with all her heart to achieve fidelity, found it impossible

ALEXANDER KIRKLAND
He plays the lead in "Wings Over Europe," another Theater Guild offering

ANN DAVIS
She is very fine as the wife in Ernest Pascal's "The Marriage Bed"

because of some lack of purpose within herself. Not even the example of her mother, who had followed the path of gypsy loving down to a tattered dustiness, could deter her from passing on from her husband to a lover; could check her when she found that still another man was calling.

In its essence, this play is in agreement with conventional morals, since in the end *Ellen* kills herself.

On the opening night the much more subtle ending which Mr. Anderson had first written was used. Then, after summoning the Dark Lover, she found it impossible to be faithful even to him, and flung open the windows to breathe the air of the rather tawdry life which stretched before her.

But more important than its conventionality, "Gypsy" is the answer to all those young poets who think that only casual love can be real love, and that fidelity—to anything or to any-

body—is merely blind adherence to outworn superstitions. "Gypsy" met with considerable critical disfavor, but found its audience none the less. Miss Claiborne Foster, in the leading rôle, seems to be one of the few who have really understood the play.

"The Marriage Bed" is Ernest Pascal's dramatization of his own novel of the same title. To fit it to the stage he has been forced to chip away almost half of it, and the result—while a singularly well put together and effective play—is considerably less than a full expression of his views on marriage. As it is presented at the Booth Theater it is a plea for the sanctity of legal marriage; in the novel form it argued that there is a certain real marriage which may transcend the conventional forms, if it cannot be contained in them. But even thus abbreviated, it is interesting, and has its roots in life.

It was splendidly cast for its presentation to Broadway. Ann Davis was very fine as *Mary Boyd,* the wife whose claim in the end proves superior to those of casual love. Helen Chandler was delicately appealing in the rôle of *Cecily Reid, Mary's* sister. The others in this unusual cast were Edward Emery, Edwin Stanley, Elizabeth Patterson, Harriet MacGibbon, Ernest Wood, Allan Dinehart, and Mildred McCoy.

"Wings Over Europe," which the Guild presented at the Martin Beck Theater, and which has had rather uncertain going, is half drama of ideas —written with a very true feeling for the right and the poetic word — and half melodrama of the old H. G. Wells's "War of the Worlds" variety. It was by no means even, but it was always intelligent and sometimes rather fine. It was based on the possibility that scientists may find a profitable way to liberate the energy in the atom.

Such a liberation of energy would, of course, change our world utterly. The authors, Robert Nichols and Maurice Browne, dramatized this possible change by bringing the poetic young scientist—*Francis Lightfoot*—who had solved the problem of the liberation, before the staid and unimaginative group forming the cabinet council at 10 Downing Street. The reaction of the politicians to his promise was as fumbling as might have been expected—but as he did not expect.

Considerable interest was aroused in the play by the absence of any woman from the cast. The chief rôle was intrusted to Alexander Kirkland, who did very well by it.

"Serena Blandish," which Jed Harris produced, is probably the least important of the plays worth any mention in an article purporting to treat only of the best among the recent productions. It is a somewhat confused adaptation of the novel of the same name which was concerned with the efforts of *Serena*—a young woman lacking notably in the instinct of self-preservation—to get married. It was a tolerably amusing and rather over-civilized book, but despite the efforts of Miss Ruth Gordon, the chief rôle in the play remained sadly confused. The difficulty apparently was that S. N. Behrman, who made the adaptation, tried to retain the character from the book while changing the action which grew inherently out of that character conception. But it was staged with Mr. Harris's customary skill.

EILEEN CREELMAN'S lively, informative article on that startling development in the movie world

"TALKING PICTURES"

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Don Denisio

By John Steuart Erskine

A tragic story of life in Olancho—Padre Nicho finds peace and self-respect in losing everything else

THE tropical sun glared down, hot and very bright, upon the narrow market street of Olancho, where no wind stirred the dust between the gray cobbles. At either curb the country women, crouching over their baskets of mangoes and pumpkins and fly-covered brown sugar, hoisted black umbrellas and panted in their sweltering shade, their lips parted, their eyes half closed.

The gaunt, wrinkled housewives who moved slowly along the uneven pavement, collecting their supplies by the *centavo* and the *cuartillo,* drew their black *rebozos* over their graying hair and shielded their eyes from the sun with thin brown hands. An Indian soldier, barefooted and dressed in a ragged, pale gray jacket and trousers, which might once have been a uniform, lounged across the street, trailing his big rifle, seized a mango from a basket and proceeded to peel it with his teeth, spitting the strips of green skin on the pavement.

The market place was long and narrow and surrounded by low adobe buildings, plastered and washed white or pink or blue. At the lower end stood a small *libreria,* its proprietor leaning against the doorpost, basking half asleep in the sun. At the upper end was a Syrian's shop, with its own-

ner, energetic even in the sultry heat, hailing the passers to come in and buy.

Halfway down the street, and a little back from it, the principal building of the market place — the church of San Jorge — raised itself high above the neighboring roofs. The Spaniards had built it, more than a hundred years before, imitating in clumsy adobe and flat brick the baroque architecture of Bourbon Spain. The pink-washed façade was a checkerboard of niches, divided by twisted, barley-sugar columns, and was surmounted by a curved and broken pediment. In the central niche an equestrian St. George gazed piously skyward as he carelessly thrust his lance through a small dog with a forked tail.

One active person moved through the market—an old woman with an uncovered head of short gray hair that flew wildly around her brown and wizened face. She was dressed in a man's torn shirt and a skirt, ragged to the point of indecency, which fell in a fringe of tatters no lower than her bare knees. From basket to basket she passed, peering under the umbrellas and demanding alms with raucous volubility. She gleaned here a copper, there a fruit, and everywhere harsh words, for she was little loved by the poor folk upon whose kindliness she preyed.

"*Vaya!*" ejaculated one old woman fiercely, baring her yellow snags of teeth and crooking her fingers into talons in defense of her quinces. "There goes Padre Nicho. Beg from him!"

As she spoke, Don Denisio Laines, the priest of the church of San Jorge, came out of a side door, pulled it shut behind him, and locked it with a large iron key. The beggar hurried across the street to his side and clutched familiarly at his greasy black sleeve.

"Don Nicho!" she screamed hoarsely. "An alms for the love of God! A little penny that I may eat!"

The priest was a big man, as men go in Central America, broad-shouldered, fat, soft. His hair, under his rusty black flat hat, was clipped close, and was turning gray. His large face was bony and coarse, but with a weakness of expression innate in its very bones. His small light brown eyes were gentle, sympathetic, and timorous, like those of a good woman.

He looked down at the old beggar, his mind torn between the knowledge of his own poverty and the impossibility of refusing. While he hesitated, a group of children, chocolate, tan, and buff, abandoned their game—an imitation of a bull fight—and surrounded him with a circle of staring eyes and open mouths.

Despairingly Don Denisio thrust his hand into his pocket, drew out a two-centavo piece, and dropped it into the woman's palm. Without a word she turned and hurried back to the market, to continue her clamor for alms. The priest walked down the street, and for a little way the children thronged around him rudely, staring at him, fingering his cassock, even mocking his walk, for they did not fear him, and therefore did not respect him.

No one had feared Don Denisio in all the twenty years since his father, then president of Olancho, had seen him made priest of San Jorge. Every one knew the kindness of his heart and the weakness of his character, and despised him for both, although women greeted him tenderly, loving him, after their fashion, for his priesthood.

Every day he said his mass, gabbling hastily through the ritual, so that he might get back to his breakfast. Every Sunday he dragged his unwilling body into the pulpit and preached a flowery, rhetorical sermon on some text with which no one could disagree. It would have been terribly painful to him to feel that some member of his congregation had been upset by his words, for his prayer was that life might remain always unchanged for him—uneventful, unenergetic; and out of the

benevolence of his heart he wished the same to all the world.

His honesty was admirable, his conscientiousness nonexistent, and he fulfilled only that minimum of duties which his congregation and his superiors exacted of him. He had been a thorn in the side of many bishops, well educated, intelligent men from overseas; and these, impatient of this unexemplary pastor, had often tried to discipline him to better ways. Then for a few weeks he had appeared in a new cassock, and had shaved himself almost every day, until the energy that his chiefs had brought from the restless lands far from the Caribbean was spent, and he was allowed to drop back into his comfortable ways.

No one had long dreamed of treating him with drastic severity, for there was not an ounce of active vice in him. Around him, too, there fell the protecting shadow of his name, that of a family of fierce politicians, dangerous men.

In the days of its power the church had played a great part in every twig of every branch of Spanish politics; but the rising that shook the colonies free challenged the predominance of religion, and in Central America the ensuing wars of church and state damaged both almost to death. In the deadlock that still reigns in Olancho, the church is forbidden to teach the peasantry, lest it should regain its old power; and the state is menaced by the ignorance of its people, whom it cannot afford to instruct.

Of these politics that surrounded his office Don Denisio was timorously aware. When such matters arose in a conversation over a glass of orange wine, his loud talk was silenced abruptly, and the gestures of his thick hands expressed only ignorance and caution. All that he desired from life was another twenty years of this unruffled peace, and he knew that not even he could safely criticize the powers that were, or those that would inevitably succeed them.

" A priest should have no opinion on temporal politics," said Don Denisio piously. " In things of the spirit, yes!"

To-day his mind was unoccupied, a playground for vagrant thoughts.

He was hungry, and at home his mother would have green corn cooking for him. The house, a hollow square of adobe rooms, was occupied by his abundant nephews and nieces, and by the widows of his four brothers, who had all succumbed to the eventualities of local politics. His mother ruled therein with kindly efficiency, keeping clear for him his large whitewashed room with its iron-barred windows and its floor of flat, square bricks, and shooing the children from the shady courtyard in the afternoon, in order that he might recline at ease in his string hammock, reading his office in a low monotone.

His way led past the *cuartel,* where Indian soldiers sprawled insolently upon the pavement, forcing the passers-by to step into the gutter to avoid them. The capital was full of these Indians, recruited by the thousand for the armies of old Don Pura, the president. They begged alms in the streets, asked food at kitchen doorways, and pushed shamelessly into the shops to take what they wanted from the shelves, sure of the support of their chief. Don Pura, a vast, fat man with a broad, dun, white-mustached face, truculent yet jovial, smiled dangerously when complaints reached his ears, knowing that his government was safe only so long as his army loved and obeyed him.

At sight of Don Denisio, one of the Indians spoke a low word, and swiftly the soldiers drew themselves to one side or the other and raised their hats, leaving a passage for the priest on the pavement.

" Bless you, my sons," he muttered, and hurried between them shamefacedly.

It galled his manhood to have such

men offer him the courtesy due to a priest, as if he were exempted from the great tyranny that bowed the Spanish community under an Indian yoke. For the remedy was still far away. The Indians could be loyal and obedient to their leaders, the Spanish stock were neither, and so could not unite; and the Indians patrolled on, flaunting dangerous weapons, regarding the wayfarers with flaring wild eyes that showed the blind ignorance of their stunted souls.

"A priest should have no opinion on politics," Don Denisio assured himself, covering his shame with a good moral, after the fashion of men.

Already the Indian soldiers had been in the capital for a year, but there was still a dazed look in the faces of the people, who knew not how to bear the indignity. The government had ordered all things to be as usual; but if a shop opened, it ran the risk of being looted, and if the owner protested, he became an enemy of the state. They dared not revolt. Moscotto, a former minister of war, had risen in arms; but Don Pura had laid hands upon his family, and had warned the revolutionary that it would go hard with his wife if he did not surrender.

No one could believe it possible that the rules of the political game could be so infringed; but Don Pura had had Moscotto's wife's head shaved and rubbed with honey, and had put her out in the sun for the flies to eat. In panic the revolt dissolved, each fearing that his own family might next fall under the president's hand; and day after day new professional soldiers drifted into Don Pura's camp, making his party irresistibly stronger.

Don Denisio had felt very sick when he had heard of the torture of this woman, whom he had known well. A picture of her suffering had troubled his sleep, and his scalp had prickled and burned in sympathetic agony; but even to his own ears his moralizing had sounded feeble indeed. What a priest could do for her benefit, he did, saying his mass for her, whispering the dedication nervously, as if the Almighty himself might think this a political action. He had felt better when the service was over, and had tucked the memory away in a corner of his soul where he stored the visions he would fain have forgotten.

II

DON DENISIO turned in at the doorway of his home, passed through the dark sitting room, where his heels echoed on the brick floor, and out again into the sunny courtyard, with its single cabbage palm and its pots of blue plumbago and scarlet geraniums.

"Little mother, I have come," he called in a deep voice.

His black eyebrows twitched up, as if in surprise at his own noise, and his face took on a disarming smile, as if in fear that some one might be offended with him. He seated himself comfortably in his hammock and dreamed in the hot shade, listening to the whir of the flies that wheeled in the sun, clung together for an instant, and dropped again to rest on the scorching flagstones.

Feet pattered behind the flowers, and large brown eyes stared between the broad calidium leaves, as his nephews scuttled in and out of the kitchen. A sister-in-law, barefooted and with her hair down her back, passed him with a pleasant greeting. They meant very little to him, this large family that lived under his shadow. With a *woof, woof,* of broad wings a vulture alighted on the ridge of the pink-tiled roof.

A few moments later the priest was called to his luncheon, and he ate heavily before returning to his hammock. The afternoon was hot and cloudless. In a wooden cage by the kitchen door a gray solitaire whistled his thrilling music of the mountain forests. The priest dozed comfortably, his mouth falling open, and flies alight-

ing nervously on the stubble of his unshaven cheeks.

A hand grasped his shoulder and shook it.

"Nicho!" cried his mother's voice. "Wake up!"

He started awake and stared into her wrinkled, pale brown face, blinking as the brilliant light from the blue sky and the pink-brown roofs dazzled his eyes.

"Nicho!" she repeated. "Some one is dying—come!"

Don Denisio lay still, paralyzed by the heavy lassitude of afternoon. His eyes closed again, but his mother shook him roughly.

"Nicho!" she cried in his ear.

Unwillingly he swung himself out of the hammock and stood rubbing his face with his plump hands. At last he picked up his hat, put it on, and shambled into the sitting room.

A woman was waiting there—a young half-breed Indian, dressed in white, with a black *rebozo* around her shoulders. He knew her well, for with her sister she kept a rum shop at the edge of his parish; but when he saw the tears still wet upon her dusky cheeks, he felt like drawing back and running away from this unwanted sorrow that thrust itself upon him.

"Father, Don Nicho, come quickly!" she begged. "It is my sister's daughter. Have you the sacraments here?"

"We must go to the church," replied Don Denisio. "What has happened, my child?"

She clutched his arm and almost dragged him toward the door.

"Come!" she urged. "I will tell you."

He had known the niece well by sight—a neat, respectable child, small, and yet very mature for her ten years, always hurrying about some business of her mother's, or sewing quietly in the shop and rising from her corner to attend, serious eyed, to the needs of each customer. The child's father, it was said, was Gabriel Banegas, the poet, who for two years had filled the journals of Olancho with verses of facile beauty and keen humor, earning thereby the money with which he drank himself to death.

The girl had been carrying a meal to a cousin—a mason, who was at work replastering a house near the river—when she encountered a group of soldiers, drunken and noisy. They recognized her, for they had often drunk in her mother's shop. They stopped her with a jest, surrounded her with boisterous good humor, took the food from her and ate it in spite of her protests, kissed her and tossed her from hand to hand, exciting themselves with her helplessness. The neighbors heard her scream for help, but they dared not notice; and an hour later they carried her back to her mother, bruised, bleeding, and nearly dead.

The woman wept as she related the story, and the priest dabbed at his own eyes with his dingy black sleeve. He wished that she had not told him. He could see it all too clearly through the girl's eyes—the big brown soldiers towering over her, terrifying her, bruising her with hard hands that knew not their own strength, and delighting in her agony, like little boys torturing a captive lizard.

At the door of the rum shop the guide stood aside for the priest to enter. Don Denisio took off his hat, stooped to avoid the low lintel, and hesitated uncomfortably in the little room in front of the table with its two glass jars of government rum.

From behind a curtained door came the feeble moan of a child, and his heart was wrung with pity for the sufferer, with shame for his own presence there. He longed to run away and leave this misery behind, to wall himself up in his house and not know of the horrors of the world outside. They hurt him too deeply.

The curtain was drawn back, and

reluctantly he passed through. The tiny inner room was crowded, for the mother knelt, weeping noisily, beside the bare bed, her black hair falling loose over the dirty pink blanket. Against the opposite wall leaned the doctor, a little middle-aged man, untidy and unshaven, with large black eyes inflamed by drink. He shrugged his shoulders and made a grimace at the priest, expressing his own helplessness, and then continued to stare about the room vaguely, lost in his own sparkling world of drunkenness.

Don Denisio knelt beside the bed and looked down into the child's face. He decided that she was unconscious, although her eyes were blurred with tears. Now and then she shook, as if with some inward struggle, and then her breathing sounded again, slight and quick. On her cheeks, at the corners of her mouth, were stains of blood.

The priest put his hand on the mother's shoulder and groped for the conventional phrases of consolation; but within him something struggled for mastery, and he could not meet the woman's eyes. Recovering himself, he repeated the prayers for the dying and administered the last sacraments; but he felt no reality in what he was doing, no assurance that to-morrow he would not meet this child again, trotting seriously about her little business of life.

Mechanically he repeated the prayers, but his mind ached in sympathy with the suffering around him. He rose to his feet and picked up his hat. The mother thanked him through her sobs, and he went out ashamedly.

At the front of the house he met the doctor, who was loitering in wait for him, and they walked up the crooked street together. There was an unhappy silence, but Don Denisio felt that he, as a priest, must say something.

"It is the will of God," he muttered. The words sounded shocking in his own ears, and he contradicted himself hastily: "It cannot be. I do not understand!"

The doctor muttered inaudibly, the silvery haze of drunkenness about his mind still urging him to the childish extremes of song or tears.

"The men were drunk," he said suddenly in an unnecessarily loud voice, feeling that this phrase made all understandable and excusable. "Ignorant fools! No one could stop them—they are the police."

Don Denisio made a gesture of hasty agreement, but his mind still groped for some spiritual reality under this bald statement of fact.

"Government soldiers drunk on government rum!" he mused aloud. Then he glanced nervously at his companion, as if he might have been detected in political thought. "Yet her mother also sold rum, perhaps to these men. Was it a punishment of her?"

The doctor's head was clearing as he walked, and gloom settled upon his spirit.

"A child is killed by a falling tile," he muttered. "Is the tile to blame, or the child? The house of state is rotten. We are all guilty of that—we who act as floor boards, instead of beams to hold up the crumbling roof."

He relapsed into silence, thinking out a political speech with this simile as its basis.

Don Denisio sighed shudderingly.

"A priest should have no opinions on politics," he repeated to himself consolingly.

III

Politics have a way of reducing themselves to civil life, and one Saturday, soon afterward, Don Denisio met them again. He was coming from the plaza through one of the narrow side streets whose blank walls hide the houses of the richer folk, when he saw a group of people peering curiously around the corner of a wall. He joined them, asking one after another what was afoot.

"The soldiers!" a man volunteered in a whisper. "They think this family is revolutionary."

The priest saw that the street was full of soldiers, hiding in doors and windows, their rifles leveled at the entrance of one of the larger houses. A man appeared in the doorway—a stoutish, gray-haired man whom Don Denisio recognized as the editor of the *Thunderbolt,* a literary weekly. He was held on either side by a barefooted soldier, and was followed by an officer, a sturdy youth in khaki, with heavy brown eyes and a loose mouth, who called an order over his shoulder to those within the house.

Shrieks sounded, and two women were dragged out, struggling with the Indian soldiers. The man fought wildly to get free and burst into a frenzy of protest.

"Be silent!" ordered the officer coldly.

Another woman shrieked behind the wall, and again the man flung himself furiously from side to side. He tore one arm from the soldier who clung to it, but without hesitation the officer drew a revolver and shot him through the body. The women screamed and tried to cover their eyes, and the crowd at the corners shuddered a little at the cold-blooded murder of a man they all respected; but no one made a movement to interfere. On the ground the man writhed in agony, throwing up his head to sob out the pain of the wound under his hand.

In the pity of that instant Don Denisio forgot himself. Sympathetic pain throbbed in his own vitals at sight of the man's suffering, and he hurried forward and knelt by the victim's side, longing to bring some comfort to those tortured eyes that saw nothing but agony; but his first words showed the uselessness of his attempt, and he changed to hurried prayer.

Suddenly he felt the touch of a ring of cold metal on the back of his neck, and he stopped quite still in horror, his little eyes rolling in an attempt to see the death that threatened his recklessness.

"Get back!" commanded the officer's contemptuous voice. "Who told you to meddle with traitors, *zopilote?* Get back!"

Don Denisio scrambled to his feet and fled hastily amid a few half-hearted jeers from the crowd, ready as always to join in harrying the conquered; but he caught sight of the shocked face of an Indian soldier who witnessed for the first time the menacing of a priest. His heart was swollen with fear for his own safety, with pity for the dying man, and with rage at the insult thrust upon him in the presence of the crowd; for a priest is not usually called a black vulture to his face, however often the term may be applied to his cloth.

That evening Don Denisio could not talk and could not rest. He ate little, and did not hear his mother's anxious questions as to his health. His wounded dignity raged within him, choking him with bitterness, and he fought vainly to silence it. He lay alone on his bed, his face in his hands, while the swarming children were packed away to sleep, and the sisters-in-law foregathered in the sitting room to sew and talk interminably, their leather-backed chairs drawn into a narrow circle around the little lamp.

The reflected glow of the sunset leaped from cloud to cloud across the dome of the sky, fading at last in a pink glow above the ridge of the western roof, and the rising chill of the dry mountain air spoke of the deepening night. The stars were out, a blaze of constellations in the inky sky, and two planets glowed white and orange overhead.

Don Denisio rose from his bed and shuffled up and down the empty courtyard, his soft shoes sibilant on the pavement. His sense of outrage faded into sleepiness, but now his dull mind was haunted by all the visions of

horror that had drummed for admission into his consciousness during these recent weeks. He saw the wife of the revolutionary tortured in the hot sun, the eyes of the little girl weeping her way into death, the dying prisoner. It might have been his mother, his niece, himself.

He felt no anger with the men who had committed the crimes, poor tiles on the rotten roof of the state; but he could not shut himself off from the life of his people. He must share their shame and their misery, bullied by an irresponsible, ignorant army. He must share in their guilt if he did nothing to attack the evil.

"A priest should have no opinions on politics," he murmured, and he flinched beneath the weight of his shame.

Far into the night he walked, torn by awful memories and horrible anticipations that he was too sleepy to fight down, praying for understanding. Time and again he decided that his duty was to do nothing, but his conscience refused to be satisfied. Would no one else dare to speak a word of protest against this hideous tyranny? Were all afraid?

His mind became more weary and confused as he wandered. His thoughts were mingled with dreams of familiar things—of roads winding among the black pines of the hilltops, of the bishop in full regalia confirming the white-ribboned candidates of his parish. At last he threw himself again upon his bed, and slept soundly.

His mother awakened him in time for his early mass, and he rose, feeling thirsty and dazed, as if he had been drinking. He said his mass mechanically, with abstracted mind, and returned to his home, feeling the sun hot upon his neck and a great terror cold on his heart. He felt that he had decided to preach a sermon on politics, but he could not remember having come to this conclusion. He knew that he did not dare.

Again he lost himself in the maze of emotion that had afflicted him the evening before, dragging him back to the horrors that he wished to avoid. He would not ruin the quiet happiness of his life when it would do no good. He had no family to protect him now, and he would be shot against a wall like a dog. He saw it as in a picture, as if he stood outside himself and watched Indian soldiers aiming their heavy rifles, even while their hands shook with fear of the sacrilege they were committing.

Hastily he dismissed the dream, terrified lest he should find himself ready to leave the things that he loved. He must not preach at all. If only he could fall ill!

For an hour he sat with his head in his hands, trying to imagine the symptoms that might keep him in the house. A message to the big church of El Calvario would find a priest to say his mass for him; but the symptoms did not appear. At last his mother, dressed for church-going in her best black dress and black shawl, aroused him again, and he set out stupidly for San Jorge.

There was little excitement in religion as customarily purveyed by Don Denisio, and, as monotonous religion is as little suited to the tropics as intellectual controversy, those parishioners who could spare the time went farther afield in search of better music and more rousing sermons. This morning the priest was a few minutes late in appearing, and his small congregation was already assembled. Over the heads of his acolytes he saw his church as if it were a strange place—the great crucifix over the high altar, the small side altars halfway down the nave, one with a statue of the Virgin with the body of her Son on her knee, the other with a St. Sebastian bristling with arrows like a fretful porcupine. Don Denisio wondered, shuddering, that the blood on these statues had never seemed real to him before.

He intoned his mass badly, for his mind was sadly disturbed, listening to the sounds outside the narrow windows, the click of hoofs on the cobbles, children shrieking at their play, the clank of water cans on a donkey's back, as if he might find help or inspiration in them.

At last, in the familiarity of the ritual, he regained his self-assurance, and he had forgotten his trouble as he chanted the Latin Gospel. Then he left the chancel and climbed into the pulpit. He read a list of forthcoming feasts and the banns of an adventurous couple, and then his hurried gabble ceased, and the congregation settled down to sleep through the long sentences of his usual rhetorical, unambitious sermon.

He looked down upon them, recognizing almost every face, for in that little capital all men are friends or enemies. He had thought to mention the sad state of their land; but his eye caught the serene old face of Doña Petrona Vargas, the president's aunt, and the stern mustache of General Villatriste, assistant minister of war. He saw dozens of people whom such controversial views would offend. He could not say what he had thought, for a priest should have no views on politics.

As he groped in his mind for a text, his wandering glance fell upon the side altar of the Virgin at the tomb, and he shuddered sickly, remembering that so the body of the murdered man had lain the day before. Would Don Denisio have been silent at Calvary also? His plump face was contorted with pain and fear, and he saw that his congregation was staring at him in astonishment.

"My brethren," he began hoarsely, and stopped, licking his dry lips with a sticky tongue.

Then his words began to tumble out of their own volition, in clumsy, incomplete, almost unintelligible sentences, the emptying of an overburdened conscience. He spoke of the horrors around them, which had no voices to speak for themselves. He stopped in terror of what he was doing, for he felt that he was ending his own life; but it was too late now, and he talked on as one beyond the grave might discuss the sorrows of the world and the pitiable ignorance of those who afflicted it.

Suddenly he ceased, realizing that everything was said. In the silence he heard the claws of a vulture scratching on the tiles of the roof. Only one face in the congregation remained unchanged—that of the president's aunt, who half smiled and bowed her head, approving the sound doctrines that she was too deaf to hear. The others stared at him in surprise, anger, or excitement, as they had never gazed at him before.

Don Denisio drew a deep breath, realizing that at last he was a man. He made the sign of the cross, descended the pulpit steps, and returned to the altar.

Half an hour later, as he left the sacristy, a file of soldiers surrounded him and led him away to prison. In the streets no man smiled at him or spoke a word of consolation; but Don Denisio carried his head high and silently praised God that life was so good.

That evening in the little city of Olancho no one but talked of Don Denisio and his sermon, and many of them muttered uneasily:

"He was a good man, Don Nicho, a very good man!"

But through the windows they saw brown-faced soldiers stumping up the empty streets, and the mutter died away on pale lips.

In his big room in the presidential palace, old Don Pura, the president, dictated two letters—one an apology to the Bishop of Olancho, the other an order to the governor of Trinidad to recruit five hundred more Indians for the garrison of the capital.

What a cigarette meant there

Forty hours in the wireless room, sending, sending, sending... till help for a helpless ship is drawn across hundreds of miles of storm-wrecked ocean. And afterward, only one comment: "Good thing we had plenty of cigarettes!"

What a cigarette means *here*

Forty hours at the curing-barn— the most anxious hours in all the tobacco season.

The last wagon in from the fields, the barn full, the fires lighted—now the delicate work of curing commences. Day and night, day and night, watching thermometers, tending fires, adjusting ventilators—with loss of a year's work the penalty of carelessness, with loss of flavor the result of haste.

Vastly important, of course, are the later ageing and blending—but to this tireless vigil at the curing-barns you owe no small part of Chesterfield's flavorful and satisfying mildness.

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.

From 800 to 1,000 pounds of tobacco can be cured in this barn at each "firing."

field

... *and yet* THEY SATISFY

Bob Davis Recalls

"A Terrible Conflagration" at Yale's Berkeley Oval

By Bob Davis

BIRTH control, hygiene, Freud, Kay, Dorsey, Ellis, hereditary influence and analytic chemistry of the human race all waver and halt when a mother with one chick looms on the horizon.

I know a youngster who was about five years of age when his father died. All that was left after the estate had been probated was a few securities of doubtful value and one heroic mother still in her girlhood. The education of her son was the dream of her life. To this end she dedicated her existence; lessons at her knee, public school, prep school; all preliminaries to the great end. This mother and son, welded closer by their mutual loss, came to New York when the business of the boy's physical and intellectual welfare took precedence over all else. Self-denial, patience and courage comprised the trilogy of her ritual.

In due course the son was guided through the mazes of his novitiate until, equipped with the necessary insulation of protective training, he entered Yale University, there to complete the education bought and paid for by his widowed mother.

The ambitious young freshman, now in his eighteenth year, found himself at the beginning of the present term billeted at Berkeley Oval, where he shared a suite of hall bedrooms with one other half of the rising generation. It is a well-known fact that any pair of boys united under a student

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

lamp, cramming to face their exams, holds in the hollows of their veal like hands the intellectual salvation of their native land.

The holidays arrive and the mother and her one chick are for a brief period united. The boy thrills her with the recital of his new existence. He tells her of his rooms, of his companions, of the English "prof," the French "prof," the "prof" who has already begun to arouse the boy's interest in science. He saturates her beating heart with the nameless satisfaction that mothers alone are capable of feeling. There is nothing more to be said; words are futile and all description fails.

"You must come to the university and see for yourself," he tells her. "Just drop in at the Oval. Anybody there can tell you where I am. You'll meet some of the other boys." Youth is gregarious.

Within a short time after that historic reunion the mother, yearning to see the boy again and deciding to surprise him, makes a pilgrimage to New Haven, traveling by express train, gazing constantly out of the window so that she can observe every foot of the country through which her offspring travels in his journeys to and fro. What a wonderful country these two live in!

Not because of Aladdin's lamp, but with magic nevertheless she arrives at Berkeley Oval and enters through the iron gate. An attendant receives her card and disappears into the gloom of remote hallways. Voices, echoes, fragments of arguments reach her ears. The red brick walls inclose three sides of the court. Windows face her. Two students, one with a book, the other with a broken tennis racket, both in animated confabulation, hurry past her. Boys, boys, boys, vibrant, alert, untrammeled, graceless but courageous; what a procession of miraculous males!

The attendant returns. Behind him she hears a familiar footfall. She rises, wavers, and they are in each other's arms. Neither of them says anything new and says it repeatedly. But they say it only to each other, so why worry? There are occasions when inflection gives variety to repetition.

"And now," the boy exclaims proudly, "you must come and see my apartment." Together, arm in arm, they stroll out into the Oval oblivious of all else save themselves.

Suddenly a window is opened with a bang, revealing a shock-headed boy shouting at the top of his high tenor:

"Fire! Fire!"

More windows go up.

"Fire! Fire!"

A kid in a bathgown appears at his window and adds to the din. One face at a window, three faces, windows lifted above, beyond, beside them, and

from them all emerges the wild cry:

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

Chaos ensues. Heads appear everywhere and the din becomes a chorus of alarms. The mother, bravest of the brave, draws nearer to her son and looks up at him half in fear, half in wonderment.

"It is nothing," said the freshman son serenely with a gentle pressure of his arm and a proud smile on his boyish lips. "You are receiving a great compliment, mother. They think you a young girl."

Her eyes sparkled up to his. "What a delightful joke!" She swallowed the little lump in her throat.

Whereupon Yale's Volunteer Fire Bugs, unaware of the rapidly unfolding love story between the young mother and her one chick, ragged them some more.

When the Great Underwriter comes to look in upon the damage wrought by that conflagration in the Berkeley Oval at Yale He will find there a real fire blazing in a mother's heart, where it will burn with a pure blue flame as long as life lasts, and leave no ashes.

THE SINGING BIRD

SPRING—spring is here!
Joy has come back with the hope of the year;
Winter is spent.

New buds are breaking to flower;
Every least leaf is a shower
Of scent.

Song leaps in limpid delight
From the trees to the crystalline blue.
Not all the birds are in flight—
One—in my heart—sings of you!

Thalun Eames

AFTER THE BANQUET

THE lights are dim, the chairs still in their places
Remind me, each of some guest, lately here;
Gay voices, and the smiles on eager faces,
And loyal hearts and dear.

The clever jest, the sally aptly spoken,
The toast that filled the room with laughter gay;
I'm glad we've met, the bread of friendship broken—
Sorry you're now away.

And this is hospitality's true glory,
When lights are dim and revelry is done,
To stand alone; write finis to the story,
And—love you every one.

L. Mitchell Thornton

Talking Pictures

Silence once was golden on the silver screen, but speech is platinum now

By Eileen Creelman

FAR, far out in the movie West there stands a frightened little city, a town terrified to the verge of paralysis by the sound of its own voice.

Hollywood, once the most cocksure of communities, has developed an inferiority complex. It has heard itself speak, and the results are none too reassuring.

The future has suddenly become the present. Talking pictures, technicolor, third dimension films, and enlarged screens, bogies discussed but never believed in by picture people, are now realities. And Hollywood is thoroughly alarmed.

The fourth greatest industry in this country is being scrapped, and another erected in its place. With production cut in half, thousands of extras out of work, hundreds of established actors trembling for their jobs, the situation is such that the president of a huge producing company remarked recently to the head of a small independent firm:

"We're all in a new business now. You've got quite as good a chance as we have. So has any one else, for that matter."

Producers freely admit their bewilderment. So do directors, and scenario writers, and cameramen. But what of the stars? There is the question now echoing across the world, while Hollywood shakes its head in answer.

Fan letters still pour into the movie capital from all corners of the globe. But no longer do they inquire the real name of Richard Dix, or Betty Bronson's birth date. They want to know, and all too soon they must know, how Gloria Swanson's voice records, whether Clara Bow sounds the way she looks.

There is the real crux of the question. Do they sound the way they look? And if they don't, what will the talkies do to the stars?

The answer, so far as the stars are concerned, is still simple. Big business has no intention of letting slip the millions invested in those precious names. But there are few real stars, less than sixty at the latest count.

Most of the actors whose faces are recognized the world over are still featured players. It is this group which shudders at the thought of vitaphone, and with reason. Let us look over the situation as these players have come to see it.

It took a lot to frighten Hollywood. Ever since Hobart Bosworth, sent to California for his health, persuaded the movie industry to follow him to the land of sunlight, Hollywood and its inhabitants have prospered mightily. They have gathered in gold from all parts of the world, found themselves as well known in Siam as in Los Angeles, known themselves envied by ninety per cent of the human race.

Their self-confidence was only natu-

ral. Diffidence is deadly in the show business. In an industry founded on the popularity of personalities, conceit is rather an asset. Hollywood had plenty of it. Until three years ago the little town was standing on top of the world. It feared nothing, not even Will Hays.

Broadway was a long way off, and not so much, anyhow. Stage actors were known to thousands; movie stars to millions, and tens of millions. Broadway stars, with platinum reputations in the East, were greeted with polite condescension in California. Playwrights, snubbed at Hollywood's Algonquin, the Montmartre, hurried back to the friendliness of New York. The movies simply could not be bothered with them.

Then something happened. As far as theater owners were concerned, it had been happening for a long time. Too many picture houses had been erected. There are now some twenty thousand scattered throughout the United States, enough to house comfortably all the movie fans in this country.

There was still a stubborn element that refused to attend movies. Try as they would, by adding elaborate and expensive vaudeville acts to the film program, exhibitors could not coax this ten per cent into their houses. Perhaps, had the vitaphone and movietone not happened along, they might have ultimately succeeded.

The movies had just grown up when synchronizing devices threw them back into second childhood. Within the last three years Hollywood had proved its ability to turn out intelligent adult screen fare. Most films were still being made for the fourteen-year-old mind. The tremendous cost of production forced companies to consider mass taste first.

Stories, however, were improving; and, technically and photographically, films were nearing perfection. Yet those same critics that three years ago scorned the movies as moronic entertainment, now mourn them as a vanished art.

Then came the talkies, to throw Hollywood into a panic and make each member of the movie industry, from executive and star to carpenter and studio musician, tremble for his job.

It was less than three years ago that Giovanni Martinelli made the first Warner Brothers' vitaphone picture. In a corner of the Manhattan Opera House stage, where no opera had played for many years, the Warner tribe assembled on a hot summer afternoon.

So nervous that they dared instruct Signor Martinelli only through intermediaries, Sam Warner and his associates started out on their new venture. Their company none too prosperous, they had staked everything on the success of the talking picture.

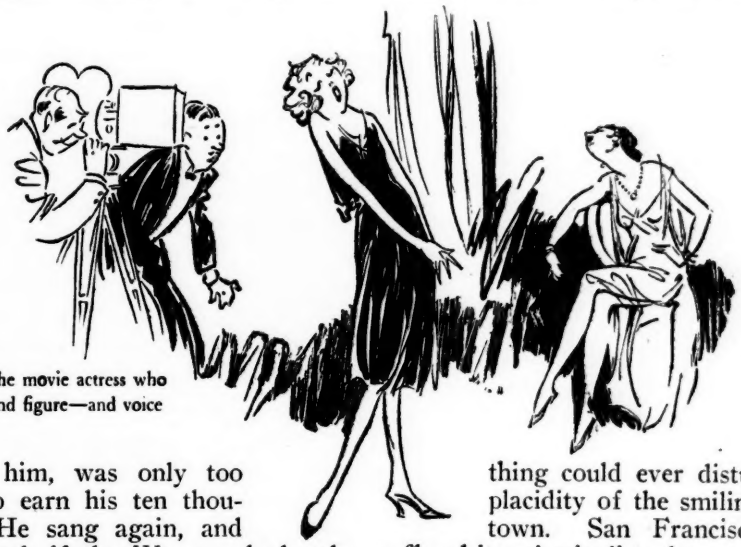
Other producers, too rich and too complacent to be bothered, had refused to tinker with the vitaphone. They had no wish to disrupt their industry. Only the Warners would take a chance.

Sam Warner's confidence was at low ebb that July afternoon. Ten thousand dollars was a tremendous sum to hand an opera singer, even a Metropolitan Opera star, for fours hours' work. The sticks had never heard of Giovanni Martinelli. When they did. and this was the whole problem, would they want to hear him? Would they want to hear any one, for that matter?

Sam, never too calm, was frantic with excitement. He dared not speak to Martinelli. If movie stars were given to temperament, opera stars were probably worse. Signor Martinelli would simply have to get along without direction. If one temper had exploded that afternoon, the Great Vitaphone Revolution probably would have been deferred for another five years, and Hollywood would not be finding its place in the sun growing somewhat chilly to-day.

Nothing did explode. The breaking

of some film during one aria was the day's sole accident. It necessitated asking Martinelli to repeat his performance. With due caution, director Herman Heller made the request. The tenor, although the vitaphone could have seemed nothing but an expensive toy to him, was only too eager to earn his ten thousand. He sang again, and again, and, if the Warners had only realized it, would have gone on singing for another four hours.



Blessed is the movie actress who has face and figure—and voice

The thing was done, the ten thousand spent, the Warners launched on a vitaphone career. Sam Warner, who had urged his brothers to risk their fortune and credit on the possibility that, where silence had proved golden, sound might be platinum, ordered a playing of the broken record. The little group stood tensely in the center of the dusty stage.

Martinelli, in his dressing room, could hear his recorded voice fill the empty theater. The vitaphone group waited. Surely it was all right—surely?

Not until the tenor, his face completely covered with cold cream, rushed on to the stage, did any one speak. It was Martinelli who came near to causing a general nervous collapse by shrieking above his own song: "*È la mia voce!*" It *was* his voice!

And there was dancing in the streets of New York.

But not in Hollywood. Hollywood had never heard of the vitaphone, and didn't care to be told. The sun is so bright in Hollywood, and the air so balmy. It seemed impossible that anything could ever disturb the placidity of the smiling little town. San Francisco had suffered its seismic disturbance; so had Santa Barbara. But Hollywood refused to believe in movie temblors even when the first faint rumblings had turned into roars.

II

Other producers smiled kindly when told of the vitaphone, and felt really sorry for those rash young Warner Brothers. The stock might, and in fact did, jump fifty points within a month after the first synchronized film was heard on Broadway.

Older and better established producers continued to smile. Something would have to be done, they realized by this time, to bolster up box office receipts. Perhaps they could persuade stars, directors, and all other studio employees to accept a ten per cent salary cut for the sake of art? Well, perhaps not.

And, as it turned out, decidedly not. Hollywood saw no reason to feel nerv-

ous simply because a few theater owners were wailing. It was months before Hollywood Boulevard was lined with advertisements of diction teachers. The broad A was still unheard in the Montmartre at luncheon time.

The Warner Brothers, undiscouraged by the lack of interest in their proceedings, went on signing up big names at staggering salaries. They paid Elsie Janis and Her Gang a neat fifteen thousand dollars for an afternoon before the microphones. They photographed Marion Talley, then the Metropolitan's newest prima donna. They synchronized the musical accompaniment of "Don Juan," a John Barrymore film, and opened it in New York. Broadway was interested, Hollywood amused.

Only William Fox, among the producers, and Bessie Love, among the actresses, took serious note. Mr. Fox began to use his own synchronizing device, the movietone, for newsreels as well as musical accomplishments. Even this did not wake up the movie industry. Not until "The Jazz Singer" made Al Jolson the biggest box office personality of his day did Hollywood take alarm.

It was only a chance that brought Al Jolson and "The Jazz Singer" together. George Jessel, whose screen career had been limited to one or two mediocre films, had been signed to play the part he had created upon the stage. When the Warners decided to vitaphone the production, inserting several songs and a dozen lines of speech, Mr. Jessel saw the opportunity to make a little additional money and missed altogether the biggest break of his life. He demanded a higher salary, as his contract did not mention talking pictures. The Warners, already far ahead of their budget, refused. Jessel left in a huff.

Al Jolson, who had been looking at the movies with an envious eye for some years, was in Hollywood at the time. Upon hearing that the Warners needed a star for their first singing feature picture, he offered to take a chance if they would. A profit-sharing arrangement was made, and Al Jolson played in "The Jazz Singer," a fact that revolutionized an industry.

"The Jazz Singer" was not a great picture. With the exception of Jolson's singing, it was not even a good picture. But it smashed, and is still smashing, box office records all over the world. Small town exhibitors, whose theaters had not been wired, found that their patrons were motoring fifty and often more miles to the nearest city where "The Jazz Singer" might be seen and heard. In a panic, they implored the Western Electric to equip their houses at once. The big company was swamped with orders.

Then Hollywood woke up, woke from a dream of golden prosperity to a nightmare of reality. Something had happened, something that might mean the end for every one. It seemed incredible that the public could prefer the crudeness of these first talkies to the elaborate smoothness of a silent film. California in general, and Hollywood in particular, has still no love for the dialogue films. But the rest of the country insists upon them.

While producers conferred dismally, Warners and Fox went right on making talking pictures. They tried using their own players, often with disastrous results as far as the players were concerned. Nothing seemed to prevent crowds from rushing into theaters showing any kind of sound pictures.

"The Lights of New York," made solely as an experiment to see whether a story could be filmed with dialogue throughout, paid all production expenses in three weeks at the New York Mark Strand. "The Terror," "The Lion and the Mouse," "The Home Towners" followed in rapid succession. Each was a hit. And Al Jolson was busy on a second film, "The Singing Fool."

With a reluctance painful to behold, other producers at last took the big step. Their theaters demanded talking pictures. The few exhibitors that had installed Western Electric equipment were cleaning up fortunes. Paramount, First National, Universal, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, United Artists, and the small companies joined the procession. The Great Vitaphone Revolution was accomplished.

There was little enthusiasm about it at first. A horrid gloom settled over Hollywood, with only one gleam of joy piercing through. This would mean the end for the foreign stars.

Will it be remembered as the scene of California's last gold rush?

No longer would Californians have to dread the annual return from Europe of Samuel Goldwyn, dragging behind him such stars as Ronald Colman, Vilma Banky, and Lily Damita. Even the Greta Garbos and the Emil Jannings might find it difficult now to hold their audiences. Hollywood, practicing the emission of vowels from the back of the mouth — Hollywood had only just discovered vowels— could smile at this thought.

Smiles, however, were few among the movie folk. Jesse L. Lasky, suddenly fired with the progressive spirit, began to make prophecies. In five years, he said right out loud while his employees winced, the silent film would be a thing of the past. Joseph M. Schenck, who still shakes his head mournfully at the thought of an audible screen, is equally sure that five years, or ten at the most, will see the "talking film fad" die out.

Carl Laemmle frankly admits that he doesn't know. More than sixty years old, he feels that he is stepping into a new industry. And, while all the others are still catching their breath, William LeBaron, of Radio-Keith-Orpheum, is making plans for television.

Although the march of the vitaphone had seemed steady and inevitable to outsiders, those inside the industry had not prepared for it. The announcements of the big companies were so many blows to their stars. What to do, what to do? Few of them had appeared on the stage. Those who had were even more frightened than the novices. They realized the power of a voice.

Among the established stars the panic did not last long. Hollywood's acting ranks soon became divided into four classes; the big stars, a small group; the featured players and those stars who were just beginning to slip; the stage actors, who are still arriving in California by the carload; and the extras, those jobless thousands.

III

FANS are used to speaking of their favorite movie actress as a star. Usually she is not officially one. An actress becomes a star only when so established in public favor that her name means more in electric lights than does the title of her picture. There is a sound reason for this.

Movies, unlike plays, remain in small towns only one or two nights. Moviegoers have not time to learn the picture's merits from reviews or from hearsay. They cannot believe the theater's boasts. Their only clew to a picture's quality is in its trade-mark, the star's name. Greta Garbo, John Gilbert, Charlie Chaplin, Charles Rog-

ers, William Haines—each has become definitely associated in the public mind with a certain type of picture.

Names with such power as this are too valuable to destroy. Big business, with millions invested in the movie industry, will keep its stars, voice or no voice. It will see to it that, should Mamie Bigeyes speak like a housemaid, then a housemaid accent will become fashionable. Should Susie Smirk develop a lisp, Wall Street will try to make a lisp the symbol of girlish charm.

And it will succeed, for a time at least. The public cares too much for its Clara Bows and Gloria Swansons to let any possible voice defects drive them off the screen. Stardom is seldom achieved in less than five years—nor does it often last more than five years more. Most of the current stars will live out their five years of popularity before softer-voiced newcomers drive them into silence and obscurity.

Douglas Fairbanks, therefore, is ignoring his Denver twang and making a talking film. Because he knows no more than the rest of the world how talkies should be made, Mr. Fairbanks is experimenting. Instead of using dialogue throughout the film, each character in "The Black Mask" steps out from behind a velvet curtain, introduces himself to the audience, explains his motives, and bows himself into silence. Mr. Fairbanks, incidentally, was a stage star twenty years ago.

His wife, the demure Mary Pickford, is also trying her luck in the talkies. "Coquette" uses dialogue in each scene. A still more radical note in the film will be the appearance of the star without her blond curls. The combination of the two novelties was too much for Miss Pickford at one time during the making of this picture. Worn out by the strain of microphone work, the star collapsed and was forced to take a four-day rest in the middle of production.

Gloria Swanson, Norma Talmadge, Ronald Colman, Norma Shearer, Clara Bow, all these stars are now working in their first talking films. Miss Swanson admits to experiencing terror during her first scenes. Next time, she hopes, it won't be so alarming.

Miss Talmadge, anxious to make a good start, has persuaded Laura Hope Crews, long versed in the ways of the stage, to coach her for her first dialogue production. Miss Bow, playing a college girl in "The Wild Party," finds talking films not at all to her liking. They are rather painfully like work. Instead of an orchestra fiddling gayly while she flits briefly through a scene, there is an appalling silence, a silence so pronounced that guards are stationed without the studio gates to enforce it upon passing motorists. There are lines to be learned and rehearsed, rehearsals that drag on for weary hours. And, in Miss Bow's opinion, worst of all, there are playbacks of the recorded dialogue.

These playbacks so worked on the star's nerves that the director finally ordered them discontinued. Because Miss Bow is used to the aid of music during emotional scenes, a victrola now plays loudly between takes. The studio orchestras, with their portable pianos and doleful violinists, are a thing of the past. So is the wise-cracking and horse play once so typical of a movie set. The making of talkies is a solemn and a serious business, not to be jested with. And Miss Bow is sorrowful over their coming.

As a star, and one who led all the others in world-wide box office popularity for 1928, Miss Bow can afford to dislike the talkies and yet to make them. It is the lesser fry which looks upon the voice from the screen as a writing upon the wall. They have got to be good, and well do they know it. Already at the Warners the first question asked of an actor is: "Can you speak correct English?" and the second "Have you had any stage experi-

ence?" The answers, unless a player is to be banished to the limbo of silence, must be yes.

The older stars, who find themselves at the bottom of the exhibitors' list, and many of the featured players, at first frantically sought elocution teachers. After months of learning the correct use of the tongue and lips, they tried microphone tests—only to find that too pronounced a use of the lips in speaking photographed like a series of yawns. They had to start all over again. Several of them, hampered by their appearances in the first rickety talking films, will have a hard struggle for a second opportunity. A few lucky ones have become vitaphone personalities overnight.

Among these latter is Bessie Love. While talking pictures were still only a Broadway myth to most of Hollywood, Miss Love prepared for a vitaphone career. She had plenty of time to study the situation. Casting directors, for the last year or more, had been none too kind to Miss Love. After a brief career of near-stardom, she had dropped to playing in independent productions. Her salary had crumbled from four figures to three.

Miss Love decided that the talkies might save her. After a long course of singing and dancing, and ukelele lessons, she gained self-confidence and stage experience in a ten weeks' vaudeville tour. Then she returned to Hollywood, a panic-stricken Hollywood by this time, and waited. She did not wait long.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, about to start its first musical film, heard with joy of her vaudeville tour. She was offered the lead in "Broadway Melody," a picture that, even before its first showing, has brought her a five years' contract and another chance at stardom.

Conrad Nagel had not prepared for a vitaphone career. He just happened into it. The Warner Brothers, who had him under contract, shoved him into two or three Dolores Costello pictures. His voice, unlike the star's, proved firm and clear. Although inclined to over emphasis, the Nagel voice became a Hollywood sensation. Last winter he was more in demand

Producers have turned to an older art for aid

by producers than any other leading man.

Lois Wilson and Warner Baxter are others brought back from obscurity by the magic of talking pictures. Each of these actors left Paramount two years ago rather than play any longer in Westerns. Yet it took a talking Western, "In Old Arizona," to put Baxter's name into electric lights again. He and Miss Wilson had each hoped to find bigger and juicier parts in other pictures. Instead, they found only that even in Hollywood the winters can be long and dreary.

Miss Wilson, after a year of idleness, accepted with joy a part in a talking two-reeler. She knew nothing of the stage, but her voice registered well. The Warners offered her a contract. Edward Everett Horton, whose stage experience had brought him vitaphone success, made Miss Wilson leading lady in his theatrical stock company. She is now dividing her time between stage and screen.

IV

Raymond Griffith, one of the screen's few satirical comedians, is un-

able to speak above a whisper. He still insists that this peculiarity was caused by his playing a scream off stage, while suffering from diphtheria, in an old melodrama. The accident sent him into the movies, where he prospered for a time, then found himself out of work for a year or more. The talkies, oddly enough, brought him back into favor. A microphone test proved that Mr. Griffith's huskiness records better than most normal voices.

Nancy Carroll, former chorus girl, had a problem to solve when talking pictures made her a leading woman. Her low voice, so pleasant on the stage, recorded too heavily to suit her screen personality, with its fluffy red curls, round baby face, and big eyes. After a few experiments, she learned to pitch her voice several tones higher, catching the metallic notes so successful with the mikes.

Jack Dempsey is another whose voice seems incongruous. The former champion has a high tenor voice, rather startling to those who have seen him in the ring. He has not yet tried the talkies.

Frances Lee, Christy comedienne, has a tiny voice pleasant in quality, but much too soft for the stage. She found that, by humming under her breath, her amplified voice could be recorded like a prima donna's.

Hollywood real estate agents are not sharing in these players' new found happiness. Talking pictures mean a new chance for the stage actors, as Broadway realized with chuckles many months ago. Stage actors mean Broadway; and Broadway means the reopening of the Eastern studios. Paramount has already started work in its Long Island plant, using only theatrical players. Pathé, Columbia, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer are all beginning to make some of their productions in New York.

Hollywood real estate owners are worried. All of them have heard of the famous ghost cities of the West. Some may have visited Havilah, where six individuals remain of the four thousand who thrived there during California gold rush days. Perhaps, and the realtors shudder at the thought, perhaps the movie boom will prove only a gold rush after all.

Since the large producers are still building million-dollar sound stages on every movie lot, Hollywood still has nothing to fear. Production will never move back to the East, where an uncertain climate makes outdoor shots difficult, and, more important, where the varied interests of a great city make actors unwilling to work the ten to sixteen hours required by Hollywood studios.

Broadway, instead, is moving to California. Actor after actor, directors, playwrights, all those once despised by the Hollywood chosen, have been recruited from the stage. Producers, bewildered by a revolution which increases production costs nearly a third, have turned to an older art for aid.

Upon only one point is every one agreed. The talking picture now is in the same stage as the silent film of twenty years ago. They are, for the most part, pretty terrible. Not a person in Hollywood pretends, for long at least, to know how they should be made. They are, none the less, being made, which means that out of the present muddle of stage and screen there will some day evolve a new art. It will have to be something related to both of these, but possessing a technique of its own.

The eye, as talking films have already discovered, is more important than the ear. A photographed play falls flat. Its climaxes do not get over. Even its lines sound different when uttered by a machine.

Two or three lean years are before the movie industry. Although fortunes have already been cleared by talking film pioneers, there has been a strong

reaction against them during the last few months. Many a movie patron, who had enjoyed the hush of the picture theater, has expressed his annoyance with the whir of the synchronizing device and the banality of the film dialogue. One henpecked fan, whose chief delight was in watching a beautiful woman talk for two hours without hearing a word that she said, has darkened the doors of the Roxy for the last time.

The theater musicians' union has set up a wail, but it is of little use. This is a mechanical age, and the talking picture is just one step forward in the mechanizing of amusements.

The mechanical difficulties of producing audible films have brought some cheer to the movie actor. Stage players are far more liable to microphone fright than are children of the silent screen. Clive Brook, after years on the London stage, lost his voice entirely when first confronted by the mike. When he regained it, it was to establish himself definitely as a movietone player.

Not all theatrical actors are so fortunate. Their very assets become liabilities in some cases. A resonant voice, powerful enough to fill an opera house, is wasted on the microphones. Amplifiers can make a whisper sound like a bellow, and soften a shriek to a hum.

V

A LOUD voice, as Al Jolson discovered in making his first vitaphone short, is rather to be deprecated. Mr. Jolson did not enjoy his initial experience with the mike. Unused to studio work, he missed the reaction of an audience, missed it rather desperately for awhile.

The late Sam Warner, with a few friends summoned at the last moment to cheer the mammy-singer, sat beside the camera, clapping his hands in pantomime throughout Jolson's act. He was instructed to keep his voice low. With a nervousness "worse than any first night," Mr. Jolson began his song. He was interrupted, amid applause from Mr. Warner's cheering section, and begged to keep his voice at a lower pitch.

Mr. Jolson agreed and began again. His eyes fixed on the beaming faces and clapping hands, Jolson tried again. Each effort was greeted by an ovation and a speech beseeching him not to let his voice out, even on the word "mammy." It took nearly a dozen ovations before the scene was finally approved.

Such little delays send production costs soaring. One producer reports that his directors average two minutes of dialogue each day, and this with actors working night and day. Even when these expensive films are completed, they can run in less than two thousand theaters in this country and only a handful in Europe. Silent versions must be made for the nineteen thousand American houses which have not yet been wired.

The European problem will not be solved for many years. Hollywood still has a corner on the movie market of the world. The Warners have attempted to make a few two-reelers for foreign consumption; and Universal announces its intention of filming a Yiddish play. This, however, will not save the English speaking actor when France begins to d e m a n d correct French, and China starts screening its classics in colloquial Chinese.

The use of doubles has been attempted, with varying degrees of success, by several companies. This practice seems destined to failure from the start. Synchronizing films with speaking actors is difficult enough without trying any fakes.

Prominent among the directors' new woes is the fact that, with the movietone sound-on-film method, a sudden noise b l o w s out the light valve. Should the studio not be prepared for this emergency, production is some-

times called off for the day because an electrician has sneezed at the wrong moment. The cast of "The Trial of Mary Dugan" wasted half a day until a whirring sound noticed in the playbacks was traced to an electric fan in Norma Shearer's dressing room, a hundred feet away. A pair of starched trousers, which crackled so little that they could not be heard by the naked ear, cost Pathé five thousand dollars in retakes.

During the making of "The Letter," Jeanne Eagels shot off a pistol too near the microphone, thereby giving the entire cast a holiday. Miss Eagels, too, discovered that an expressive voice is not always a joy and a delight. Modulations of tones, if not written down on an electrician's cue sheet, will shiver the mike. Three times, Miss Eagels, using an unexpected inflection, stopped the picture.

Eddie Cline, rehearsing his first talkie, found stage actors far more difficult to handle than those used to the camera. His first week in a sound studio was as adventurous as any in an African jungle. Six hours were consumed one busy morning in trying to eliminate a buzz from the playbacks. When this was finally traced to the humming of flies near the microphone, an insecticide was scattered about and production resumed.

An hour later another buzz, inaudible to the ear until picked up by the mike, stopped the recording. After a thorough hunt, the director discovered one of his electricians, overcome by fumes of the insecticide, was fast asleep and snoring.

These electricians are now coming into their own. The engineer, often a young man just graduated from college, is now the big boss on a movie set. No longer does the director give orders. He consults. All too often for the good of the picture, he is rebuked. It is here that the cameras must stand, and there the mikes.

What if the angles be bad? What if long shots and close-ups must be taken at the same time and with the same lighting? What if a scarcity of microphones forces the actor to hasten or slow up his speech simply in order to move from mike to mike? The engineers have not yet solved these problems, nor a dozen others. Until they do, production expenses will remain high and picture quality low.

Since the mikes prefer a monotonous voice, monotony is now the order of the day. Directors try to keep their players from using a range of more than three or four notes. The results are obvious. Any attempt to act out a dramatic scene in which no actor either raises or lowers his voice is sure to be disastrous. To avoid this, a scene must be rehearsed again and again until the sound engineers have marked each syllable, each opening or closing of a door, each footfall, on a cue sheet.

This problem has its pleasant aspects. It does tend to prevent overacting. One well-known heavy and several leading men have ruined their talking picture prospects at the start by insisting upon declaiming their lines in the good old-fashioned stock company method. Since bad acting with speech is several degrees more terrible than bad acting in pantomime, these players are now jobless.

Stage actors, and Hollywood is filled with them, find it hard to adjust themselves to these weird conditions. They know how to use their voices on a stage. Their diction is cultivated, their tones expressive. They can, and probably will, learn screen technique. But it is not easy, nor does a long term contract guarantee that a stage star will develop vitaphone personality. Already several actors and still more playwrights are wandering back to Broadway, with broken contracts and a nostalgia for the stage, where voices can ring out and applause be heard.

Monta Bell, after six months as head of the Astoria sound studios, declares the trained voice of an actor is lost

in the films. Mr. Bell, incidentally, has little admiration for most of the talkies.

Stage players are still being signed, however. Each day finds another starting westward or joining the little group in Astoria. One Hollywood studio follows this casting rule: "Each old player must c a r r y two new ones." Fredric March, of the stage, is therefore playing opposite Clara Bow, of the cinema, while Richard Dix's leading lady is Dorothy Hall, of Broadway.

But all this time we have been neglecting the extras, mentioned so casually several pages ago. The extras would never object. They are used to neglect. They are the great lower class of Hollywood, the thousands who used to hope for a place in the movie sun and now seek only to earn a livelihood.

VI

THE talkies have meant despair for the extras. Dialogue films have decreased the number of players in each picture to the minimum. No longer can Hollywood's ten thousand regulars count upon their seven dollars and a half a day. For six months most of them have been jobless.

Fewer sets, and less elaborate ones, are also the rule. Many a Hollywood set designer has decided to return to architecture. One studio in one day dropped thirty carpenters, employees of long standing, from its staff. Many of the foreign actors, including Lya de Putti, Conrad Veidt, and Victor Varconi, have already left for their homes in Europe.

As for the scenario writers, they are still a puzzle. Playwrights, imported to California by the half dozen, know nothing of the camera. Few scenarists have ever experimented with dialogue. The same is true of directors. Most companies are now trying to combine a scenarist and playwright, a stage director and a movie expert in each film. This will have to continue until each learns his new job and until the talkies themselves find out just what they are talking about.

Until then, do not expect too much from Hollywood. This readjustment will take time, and the public must be patient. Millions, and tens of millions, are being spent in experiment and research work. Stars and directors find themselves beset by conditions for which they are totally unprepared. An industry is being reshaped, with no one quite certain how the mold should be made.

"Every one has the same chance now."

It should be a reassuring phrase. To Hollywood, it is not. No industry, nor town built about one industry, can look upon such radical changes with anything but gloom.

But by the public, the millions who think of the movies only as entertainment, the Great Vitaphone Revolution should be welcomed. It means more intelligence in the making of pictures, more care, and, eventually, fewer and better pictures.

Cheap dialogue is far worse than cheap photography. Expressionless reading of lines is more tiring than the closeup of a pretty, vacuous face. A dull plot, explained and reëxplained by lines and pantomime, will bore those who could have enjoyed a silent Western.

The talkies, therefore, have got to be good if the public is to pay money to hear them. They have got to be several shades better than the old silent films, and a hundred per cent better than the current dialogue films. And the producers, with millions invested in sound stages and theater equipment, will see that they are.

Hollywood will work out its new salvation somehow. When it has, as the producers have not yet realized, there is still the possibility of television. Twenty thousand theater owners to-day sincerely hope not.

Let's Talk It Over!

A public conference in which the editor repeats what the readers say. All are invited to hurl a brickbat or toss a bouquet

Toms River, N. J.

I am writing you for my own information, and if you will tell me the truth I will keep the secret. I have enjoyed reading your Mr. Fred A. Walker's editorials in MUNSEY, called "Something to Think About." I also find in the New York *American* the same title signed by Mr. Bruno Lessing. I do not enjoy his editorials very much, but I just can't help wondering whether Mr. Walker and Mr. Lessing are one and the same person. You see, if they are two different writers, my judgment of editorials is not at fault, but if they are one writer with two names I am not sure about my criticism. It is terrible to be puzzled like this. MRS. A. W. S.

Please stop worrying, madam. Mr. Lessing may have liked the looks of Mr. Walker's title and unconsciously adopted it. That's all.

Washington, D. C.

The first magazine I ever bought was a MUNSEY during its first year of publication, and I have missed less than a dozen copies since that date. I dropped it when it joined the ranks of "all fiction" publications, but was lured back by the matchless little poems that charm its pages. The best story I ever read in MUNSEY's was "Mirabel's Island" away back in 1906. It was a great magazine then, with its illustrated articles and fiction, and I am glad to see it verging that way again.

J. T. Y.

Mount Vernon, N. Y.

You ought to call a cop. George Trevor's original idea of a sports series about the greatest athletes of all time has been swiped by the New York *Evening Telegram*, without any apology to the author or your magazine. A sap who signs himself "Daniel" comes to judgment on that newspaper's sporting page, and I hereby hand him the raspberry. He picked Jack Dempsey as the greatest fighter. Even the kindergarten pupils up here in Westchester County know better than that. Yes, sir, you ought to call two cops.

B. J. K., SR.

There's only one George Trevor.

"I was somewhat amused at J. J. R.'s remark in Let's Talk It Over!" writes J. Z., a subscriber in Los Angeles. "Of course, 'The Pay Dreamer,' by Hanks, was incredible in its faked setting, but to an admirer of Jacobs the story is entirely believable in the setting which that master humorist gave it in his 'The Dreamer.'"

Now that the legal angles have been straightened out, we offer our sincere apologies to Mr. W. W. Jacobs, noted English writer, and to our readers. The November, 1928, issue of MUNSEY contained a short story, "The Pay Dreamer," by Carlos Cramer Hanks. It was bought from a reputable, long-established agent after he had investigated the writer's credentials. Later Mr. Jacob's American agent informed us that the MUNSEY story was a duplication in plot and treatment of "The Dreamer," which was printed in 1907 in his book of short stories, entitled "Short Cruises," copyrighted by Charles Scribner's Sons. A comparison of the two stories at once proves the contention of Mr. Jacob's agent.

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